

9 PM Current Affairs Weekly Compilation

For UPSC CSE mains examination



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Features :

Arranged as per syllabus Topics
Most complete coverage of major
News Papers editorials

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The thermal cost of India's textile surge

Source: The post “The thermal cost of India's textile surge” has been created, based on “The thermal cost of India's textile surge” published in “The Hindu” on 09th April 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-3- Economy

Context: India is currently benefiting from global textile trade shifts, but rising heat stress is creating a serious thermodynamic challenge for its industrial workforce. This issue is not only environmental but also affects productivity, labour welfare, and supply chain stability.

Causes of the Crisis

1. Rising temperatures due to climate change have led to factory indoor temperatures frequently exceeding 35–40°C, which is above the safe working threshold of 30°C.
2. Studies show that at 33–34°C, a worker's productive capacity is reduced by nearly half, making extreme heat a physiological limit.
3. The textile industry is highly labour-intensive and employs around 45 million workers, making it particularly vulnerable to heat stress.
4. Many factories lack adequate cooling systems, rest breaks, and health safeguards, especially for informal workers.
5. Global supply chains impose strict deadlines and penalties, forcing factories to continue operations even under unsafe thermal conditions.

Impacts

(1) Impact on Productivity

- a. India lost approximately 259 billion labour hours annually between 2001 and 2020 due to heat stress, indicating a major productivity crisis.
- b. The loss increased to around 247 billion hours in 2024 alone, showing the worsening nature of the problem.
- c. Annual economic losses exceed \$600 billion due to reduced labour efficiency.
- d. Productivity declines by about 2% per degree rise in temperature, and this reduction can reach 4% on extremely hot days.
- e. High temperatures also cause machinery overheating and technical failures, leading to operational disruptions.

(2) Impact on Workers

- a. Workers often lose up to 50% of their wages during extreme heat due to reduced working hours or inability to work.
- b. Heat exposure leads to serious health issues such as heatstroke, dehydration, and increased workplace injuries.
- c. Informal workers lack access to paid leave, cooling breaks, and social security, increasing their vulnerability.

(3) Impact on Supply Chains

- a. Heat stress creates a “thermodynamic bottleneck” where production cannot be sustained beyond physical limits.
- b. Supply chains may collapse abruptly rather than gradually when human tolerance limits are exceeded.
- c. The burden of delays and disruptions is disproportionately shifted onto workers due to their weak bargaining power.

(4) Broader Socio-Economic Impact

- a. The crisis disproportionately affects poor and informal workers, increasing inequality.
- b. By 2030, India is projected to lose 5.8% of total working hours due to extreme heat, equivalent to around 34 million full-time jobs.

Way Forward

1. Policy Measures

- a. The government must recognise heat stress as a critical supply chain risk and integrate it into industrial and trade policies.
- b. Climate projections should be incorporated into long-term industrial planning.

2. Workplace Interventions

- a. Factories should adopt mandatory heat action plans that include enforceable temperature thresholds and regulated working hours.
- b. Adequate cooling systems, rest breaks, and regular health assessments must be ensured.

3. Financial Measures

- a. Banks should include climate risks in their lending assessments to promote resilient industrial practices.
- b. Governments should provide concessional credit and incentives for investment in cooling and heat management technologies.

4. Labour Welfare Measures

- a. Labour laws should be strengthened to explicitly address heat stress and ensure safe working conditions.
- b. Workers must have guaranteed access to clean drinking water, shaded rest areas, and medical support.

5. Technological Measures: Investment in research and development is needed for wearable cooling technologies, heat-resilient cotton, and energy-efficient production systems.

6. Global Supply Chain Responsibility

- a. International buyers should share the cost of climate adaptation through fair pricing and longer delivery timelines.
- b. The global fashion industry must move beyond treating labour costs as static and account for climate realities.

Conclusion: The heat stress crisis shows that industrial growth cannot be sustained without addressing environmental and human limits. A balanced approach that integrates economic growth with climate resilience and worker protection is essential for sustainable development.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Question: Rising heat stress poses a significant challenge to India's labour-intensive textile industry, affecting productivity, worker welfare, and supply chain stability. Discuss the causes and impacts of this crisis. Suggest measures to address it.

The other side of sport — mastering manufacturing

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3- Indian economy

Introduction

Sports in India is growing beyond cricket, with athletes like Neeraj Chopra and Lakshya Sen expanding its reach. However, the sports ecosystem is not only about players and viewership. **Sports goods manufacturing is a key but ignored pillar.** Despite strong cultural engagement, India contributes only **0.5% to the \$50 billion global market**, showing deep structural issues.

Structure of India's Sports Goods Industry

- 1. Geographical concentration:** Production is mainly located in **Jalandhar and Meerut, contributing over 80% of output**, showing limited regional spread.
- 2. MSME dominance and labour intensity:** The sector is driven by MSMEs producing stitched balls, cricket gear, and accessories, making it highly labour-intensive.
- 3. Fragmented production system:** Small-scale operations restrict scaling, technology adoption, and development of global brands.
- 4. Diversity in manufacturing processes:** Each sport requires different materials and techniques, making policy design complex and often ineffective.

Major issues with India's Sports Goods Industry

- 1. Cost disadvantage leading to price gap:** Higher input costs, inefficient logistics, and lack of economies of scale increase production cost by **about 15%**, making Indian products less competitive; for example, a football costs **₹100 in India compared to ₹85-87 in competing countries.**
- 2. Limited availability of advanced inputs:** Key materials like specialised polymers, performance fabrics, and carbon composites are not widely produced domestically.
- 3. High import duties on inputs and machinery:** Duties increase production costs and discourage investment in technology and diversification.
- 4. Logistics and location challenges:** Manufacturing clusters in northern India increase export costs due to long distance from ports.

5. **Infrastructure and compliance issues:** Rising land prices, fragmented infrastructure, and delays due to compliance reduce efficiency.
6. **High certification burden:** Testing costs range from ₹5 lakh to ₹50 lakh per product, making compliance expensive for MSMEs.
7. **Dependence on foreign testing facilities:** Lack of domestic certification centres forces reliance on European labs, increasing cost and time.
8. **Delay in innovation:** Long certification timelines discourage experimentation and slow product development.
9. **Weak global brand presence:** India lacks strong international sports brands capable of commanding premium prices.
10. **Low demand creation efforts:** Limited marketing, weak global partnerships, and absence of athlete-brand linkages restrict global demand.
11. **Focus on low-value manufacturing:** Firms remain engaged in contract manufacturing instead of moving towards brand ownership.

What should be done

1. **Rationalisation of import duties:** Reduce duties on specialised raw materials and advanced machinery to improve cost competitiveness.
2. **Targeted fiscal support:** Provide export-linked incentives, support certification costs, and promote participation in global trade platforms.
3. **Leverage allied sectors:** Use strengths in technical textiles, footwear, plastics, and light engineering to upgrade production capabilities.
4. **Develop domestic certification ecosystem:** Establish internationally recognised testing centres to reduce cost and improve time-to-market.
5. **Strengthen domestic raw material base:** Invest in production of advanced composites and performance fabrics to reduce import dependence.
6. **Promote global brand building:** Encourage domestic firms to move towards original brand ownership through coordinated national campaigns.
7. **Use athlete and institutional support:** Involve athletes, federations, and industry bodies to promote Indian sports goods globally.
8. **Strategic use of international events:** Link procurement with upcoming global sporting events to create demand and visibility for domestic products.

Conclusion

India's sports goods sector remains stuck in low-value global supply chains despite strong potential. **Structural issues, cost disadvantages, and weak branding limit growth.** A shift toward **large-scale manufacturing, domestic innovation, and global brand creation** is essential. With the right strategy and policy support, India can become a major player in the global sports economy.

Question for practice:

Examine the structural challenges and growth potential of India's sports goods manufacturing sector, and suggest measures needed to enhance its global competitiveness.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Why India wants fast breeder reactors

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3- Infrastructure

Introduction

The achievement of **criticality in the Prototype Fast Breeder Reactor (PFBR)** marks an important step in India's nuclear programme. However, criticality is only the beginning of operations. India wants fast breeder reactors because they improve fuel use, generate more fuel than they consume, and support the long-term goal of **energy security and reduced dependence on uranium** under the three-stage nuclear programme.

Understanding Criticality and Its Significance

1. **What is a fast breeder reactor:** A fast breeder reactor uses **plutonium as the main fuel** and fast neutrons to generate energy while also producing more fuel.
2. **Breeding mechanism:** The reactor core is surrounded by **depleted uranium**, which is converted into plutonium when hit by fast neutrons and then reused as fuel.
3. **Difference from PHWRs:** PHWRs use natural uranium and slow neutrons, and only a **small fraction of fuel (~1%) is used**, whereas FBRs use fast neutrons and achieve **around 10% or more fuel use**.
4. **Meaning of criticality:** Criticality is the stage when a **self-sustaining chain reaction** is achieved, where each fission produces neutrons that trigger further fission.
5. **Controlled reactor conditions:** Engineers maintain this state by controlling **fuel composition, neutron access, and reactor temperature**.
6. **Not final stage:** Criticality does not mean electricity generation. The reactor must undergo **low-power testing for months**.

Why India Needs Fast Breeder Reactors

1. **Limited Uranium, Need for Efficiency:** India has only **1-2% of global uranium reserves**, so existing reactors cannot support long-term expansion. Fast breeder reactors help extract **more energy from the same limited fuel**.

2. **Overcoming Inefficiency of Existing Reactors:** Current PHWRs use only about **1% of uranium before it becomes unusable**. FBRs increase fuel utilisation to **around 10% or more**, improving overall efficiency.
3. **Production of More Fuel (Breeding Advantage):** FBRs produce more fissile material than they consume by converting uranium-238 into plutonium. Thus enabling the reactor to **produce more fuel than it consumes**.
4. **Bridge in Three-Stage Nuclear Programme:** FBRs connect the first stage (uranium-based) and third stage (thorium-based). Without FBRs, India cannot move towards **thorium utilisation**.
5. **Unlocking India's Thorium Potential:** India has **over 25% of global thorium reserves**, but thorium cannot be directly used. FBRs produce uranium-233, which enables thorium-based reactors in the future.
6. **Meeting Rising Energy Demand:** India is the **third-largest energy consumer**, and demand will keep increasing. FBRs support expansion of nuclear power beyond current limits.
7. **Reducing Fossil Fuel Dependence:** Dependence on fossil fuels exposes India to global price shocks. Nuclear energy through FBRs offers a more stable and long-term option.
8. **Expansion of Nuclear Energy Capacity:** Nuclear power is only **3% of the energy mix**, but India plans to increase it from **8,180 MW (2024) to 100 GW by 2047**. FBRs are essential for this scale-up.
9. **Reducing Nuclear Waste Burden:** By reusing spent fuel, FBRs reduce the need for large waste disposal facilities and improve sustainability of nuclear energy.

Role in India's Three-Stage Nuclear Programme

1. **Stage one function:** PHWRs use natural uranium to produce **plutonium and depleted uranium**.
2. **Stage two role of FBRs:** FBRs use this plutonium to generate **more plutonium and electricity**.
3. **Fuel cycle continuation:** FBRs also produce **uranium-233**, which is used in the next stage.
4. **Stage three objective:** Future reactors will use **thorium and uranium-233** to produce electricity.
5. **Resource-based strategy:** India has **limited uranium but over 25% of global thorium reserves**, making this path necessary.

Major Challenges of Fast Breeder Reactors

1. **Sodium coolant risk:** Liquid sodium improves heat transfer but reacts **violently with air and water**, creating safety challenges.
2. **High engineering demands:** Systems must be **perfectly sealed with strong leak detection** to prevent accidents.

3. **Need for Strong Safety Culture:** FBRs require strict oversight, engineering precision, and strong institutional safety practices.
4. **Fuel Cycle Infrastructure:** Reprocessing spent fuel and making new fuel assemblies need additional infrastructure and regulatory systems.
5. **Economic viability issues:** PFBR costs increased significantly, and electricity from FBRs may be costlier than alternatives like solar energy.
6. **Global operational failures:** Reactors like **Monju (Japan)** and **Superphénix (France)** faced shutdown due to technical and cost issues.
7. **Limited global success:** Only **Russia has a commercial fast breeder reactor**, showing limited worldwide adoption.

Way Forward

1. **Step-wise testing approach:** PFBR will operate at low power to study **performance under different conditions**.
2. **Data-driven improvement:** Engineers will use data to refine **safety systems and efficiency**.
3. **Regulatory approval needed:** Approval from the **Atomic Energy Regulatory Board** is required for commercial operation.
4. **Fuel cycle infrastructure:** Development of **reprocessing and fuel fabrication facilities** is necessary.
5. **Scaling future reactors:** Expansion depends on PFBR success and progress towards a **closed nuclear fuel cycle**.
6. **Improve Transparency and Accountability:** Ensure clear timelines, cost control, and institutional responsibility.
7. **Strengthen Safety Systems:** Adopt strict monitoring and global best practices for reactor operation.

Conclusion

Fast breeder reactors are important for improving fuel efficiency and supporting India's long-term nuclear strategy. They enable better use of limited uranium and help move towards thorium-based energy. However, issues of cost, safety, and delays remain significant. The success of PFBR will determine whether India can achieve a reliable and self-sustaining nuclear energy system.

Question for practice:

Discuss why India is focusing on fast breeder reactors and how they contribute to its long-term nuclear energy strategy.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Nari Shakti: India's Defining Reform for the Next Decade

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 1- Social empowerment

Introduction

India has shifted women's empowerment from intent to **institutional infrastructure through planned policy design**. Under the **present Indian government**, women are placed at the centre of development. This approach recognises that **women's progress accelerates economic growth**. The focus has moved from welfare to **women-led development**, creating measurable gains in access, participation, and opportunity across sectors, making Nari Shakti a defining reform for the coming decade.

Policy-Driven Structural Transformation in Women Empowerment

1. **Financial inclusion expansion:** More than **57 crore bank accounts** opened under Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana, with **over 55% owned by women**, giving first entry into formal banking.
2. **Grassroots economic mobilisation:** Around **10 crore women in 90 lakh self-help groups** are supporting entrepreneurship and local economic resilience.
3. **Clean energy access:** Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana reached **10.5 crore households**, reducing health risks and saving time.
4. **Credit access growth:** Nearly **70% of MUDRA loans** are given to women, improving financial independence.
5. **Rising workforce participation:** Female labour force participation increased to **around 37%**, reversing a long decline.

Improvements in Human Development

1. **Integrated nutrition support across lifecycle:** Mission POSHAN 2.0 with **₹1.81 lakh crore (2021-26)** targets children, adolescent girls, and mothers through a converged approach.
2. **Technology-driven transparency in delivery:** POSHAN Abhiyaan uses **Poshan Tracker with 99.02% Aadhaar-verified beneficiaries**, ensuring real-time monitoring and better delivery.
3. **Expanded maternal and child healthcare access:** Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakram supported **16.60 crore beneficiaries**, while Janani Suraksha Yojana enabled **11.07 crore institutional deliveries**.
4. **Focused maternal risk reduction:** Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan ensures early detection of high-risk pregnancies, improving maternal outcomes.

5. **Improving dignity and reducing vulnerability:** Swachh Bharat Mission built **over 12 crore toilets**, with **93% women reporting improved safety and hygiene**.
6. **Reducing time poverty and physical burden:** Jal Jeevan Mission provided **15.6 crore tap connections**, while Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana reduced dependence on traditional fuels.
7. **Enhancing asset ownership and security:** Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana Gramin delivered **2.75 crore houses, with 73% owned by women**, strengthening decision-making power.
8. **Promoting education and changing social norms:** Beti Bachao Beti Padhao improved **sex ratio at birth from 918 to 930** and increased girls' enrolment to **78%**.
9. **Securing long-term financial stability:** Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana with **4.2 crore accounts** supports financial security of girls.

The Implementation Challenge

1. **Awareness gap persists:** Many eligible women still lack awareness, leading to uneven enrolment.
2. **Dependence on local administration:** Last-mile delivery depends on district capacity, affecting outcomes.
3. **Need for saturation approach:** Focus must shift from scheme announcement to **full coverage of all eligible women**.
4. **Shift from output to outcome:** Measuring success should move from numbers to **real-life impact**.
5. **Accountability at ground level:** Technology helps delivery, but **on-ground accountability remains essential**.

Key Initiatives and Institutional Reforms for Women Empowerment

1. **Constitutional push for political representation:** Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam provides **33% reservation in Lok Sabha and State Assemblies**, strengthening women's role in decision-making.
2. **Integrated framework for empowerment and safety:** Mission Shakti combines **Sambal (safety) and Samarthya (empowerment)** for holistic support.
3. **Strengthening institutional support systems:** Mission Shakti includes **819 One Stop Centres** assisting **10.98 lakh women** and helplines handling **214.78 lakh calls**, improving access to justice and support.
4. **Expanding access to entrepreneurship and credit:** Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana sanctioned **₹34.11 lakh crore loans**, with **68% benefiting women entrepreneurs**.
5. **Mobilising women for collective economic growth:** Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana National Rural Livelihoods Mission organised **10.05 crore women into 90.90 lakh SHGs**, strengthening local economies.

6. **Enhancing income generation capacity:** Lakhpati Didi initiative enabled **1.48 crore women to earn ₹1 lakh annually**, improving financial independence.
7. **Ensuring legal and social empowerment:** Reforms such as **abolition of Triple Talaq and extension of maternity leave to 26 weeks** improved women's rights and participation.
8. **Creating a multiplier effect through representation:** Increased participation in governance can lead to **better policy design, improved delivery, and stronger leadership pipelines**.

The Way Forward

1. **Capacity building for leadership:** Women need **mentorship, policy exposure, and administrative support** to lead effectively.
2. **Institutional support requirement:** Strong systems are needed to convert representation into **effective governance outcomes**.
3. **Simplifying policy delivery:** Programmes should be easier to access and faster to deliver.
4. **Strengthening feedback systems:** Policies must evolve based on **real needs and continuous feedback**.
5. **Outcome-based governance focus:** Success must be measured by **actual improvement in lives, not just coverage**.
6. **Using STEM advantage:** High participation of women in STEM should be used for leadership in key sectors.

Conclusion

India has created a strong base through **expanded access and participation**. The next phase must ensure **saturation, effective implementation, and leadership roles for women**. Proper implementation of **Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam** can shift empowerment from access to authority. This will strengthen **economic growth, social stability, and institutional effectiveness**, making women central to India's long-term development.

Question for practice:

Examine how policy-driven initiatives in India have transformed women's empowerment from welfare to women-led development, and discuss the challenges in ensuring effective last-mile delivery and leadership participation.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Making scholarships integral to India's academic culture

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 2- Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Education,

Introduction

India aims to achieve a **50% Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER)** in higher education, as set under the **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020** for 2035. However, the real issue is not only expanding institutions but ensuring who can access and complete education. Despite strong growth, participation remains limited. High costs, risk, and uneven access prevent many capable students from enrolling. This makes scholarships essential as a central pathway in higher education.

Current Status of India's Higher Education

1. **Expansion of institutions:** The number of higher educational institutions increased from **51,534 in 2014–15 to over 70,000 in 2025–26**, showing strong capacity expansion.
2. **GER progress with timeline:** GER increased from **0.4 in 1950–51 to 28.4 in 2021–22 and 29.5 in 2022–23**, showing progress but still below the **50% target under NEP 2020 (by 2035)**.
3. **Dominance of State Public Universities (SPUs):** SPUs serve **over 3.25 crore students** and account for **around 81% of total enrolment**, making them central to access.
4. **Rising inclusion across groups:** Enrolment increased among **OBCs (80.9%), SCs (76.3%), STs (106.8%) between 2011–12 and 2021–22**, along with improved gender parity (**GPI 1.01 in 2021–22**).
5. **Growth in research and rankings:** India's share in global research rose from **3.5% in 2017 to 5.2% in 2024**, with strong improvement in global rankings.
6. **Digital and flexible learning expansion:** Platforms like **SWAYAM (5.15 crore+ enrolments)** and online/distance programmes support wider access and flexibility.

Key Structural Challenges

1. **Access inequality:** Regional gaps and social differences still limit equal participation in higher education.
2. **Affordability burden:** Higher education requires **large financial investment**, which discourages many families.
3. **Quality and outcome gap:** Enrolment does not always ensure **skills, learning, and employability**.
4. **Cost and risk barrier:** Students in smaller towns face **uncertainty about returns**, which reduces participation.
5. **Uneven opportunity distribution:** Talent exists widely, but **opportunities remain concentrated**.
6. **Low research investment:** India spends **only 0.64% of GDP on research**, limiting innovation and quality growth.
7. **Institutional imbalance:** Heavy dependence on SPUs creates pressure on public institutions for quality and access.

Initiative Taken

1. **Government financial support:** The government provides scholarships, interest subsidies, and credit guarantees through schemes like the Central Sector Scheme (82,000 scholarships annually) and interest subvention mechanisms, reducing financial barriers for students.
2. **National Scholarship Portal:** It acts as a single digital window integrating State and central schemes, making scholarship access more transparent and efficient.
3. **Education financing support:** The Vidya Lakshmi Scheme (2024) offers collateral-free loans up to ₹7.5 lakh with 75% credit guarantee and 3% interest subvention for eligible families, improving affordability.
4. **Institutional development support:** Under PM-USHA, selected universities receive ₹100 crore grants to strengthen infrastructure, autonomy, research, and inclusion.
5. **Digital learning expansion:** Platforms like SWAYAM (5.15 crore+ enrolments), Virtual Labs (900+ labs), and National Digital Library of India (NDLI) (8 crore+ resources) expand access and improve learning quality.
6. **Flexible academic systems:** Reforms like the Academic Bank of Credit (ABC), Multiple Entry and Exit (MEME), and credit transfer (up to 40% via SWAYAM) improve flexibility and reduce dropouts.
7. **Inclusion-focused measures:** Policies support Socially and Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs), minorities, and persons with disabilities, with targeted enrolment growth such as ST enrolment rising by 106.8%.
8. **Research and innovation initiatives:** The Anusandhan National Research Foundation (₹50,000 crore) and Innovation Councils (16,000+ institutions) aim to strengthen research and innovation ecosystems.
9. **Skill and industry linkage:** Programmes like National Apprenticeship Training Scheme (NATS) 2.0 (₹489 crore disbursed) and internship platforms (54 lakh+ internships) improve employability and practical exposure.
10. **Private and institutional scholarships:** Corporate foundations and institutions provide merit-cum-means support, especially in professional education sectors.
11. **Limitation of initiatives:** Despite wide coverage, most scholarships remain limited in scale and treated as add-ons, not fully integrated into academic systems.

Why Scholarships Matter in India's Higher Education

1. **Unlocking hidden talent:** Talent is widely distributed across the country, but many capable students remain excluded due to cost, distance, and uncertainty.
2. **Link between access and participation:** Enrolment rises only when students who qualify are also able to afford entry and continuation in higher education.

3. **Barrier of financial risk:** Higher education is seen as a **long-term financial commitment**, which discourages participation from economically weaker families.
4. **Aspiration is not the issue:** The key constraint is not lack of ambition, but the **inability to manage the cost and risk of education**.
5. **Critical role in enrolment:** Scholarships directly influence **who enters higher education and who is able to continue and graduate**.
6. **Supporting student continuity:** Financial support helps students **stay in the system and complete their courses**, improving overall outcomes.
7. **Current limitation:** Most scholarships are **limited in number and treated as add-ons**, which reduces their overall impact on participation.

Learning from Historical and Global Models

1. **Ancient Indian model (Takshashila):** At **Takshashila**, students had multiple options to manage fees, including upfront payment, deferred payment, work-based learning, regional scholarships, and community support, ensuring no capable student was excluded due to lack of money.
2. **Principle of inclusion:** The system followed a clear idea that **ability should not be denied opportunity due to financial constraints**, and institutions must actively support talented students.
3. **Global academic systems:** In countries like the **U.S. and China**, scholarships are treated as a **core part of academic culture**, not as external financial aid.
4. **Alignment with local needs:** Global models link scholarships with **regional and sectoral priorities**, which helps improve enrolment, skills, and employability together.

What Should Be Done

1. **Shift to systemic approach:** Scholarships must become **central to higher education strategy**, not peripheral support.
2. **Multi-year scholarships:** Long-term support can give **certainty and stability** to students.
3. **Region-based targeting:** Focus on **low GER districts and underserved regions** to improve participation.
4. **Programme-linked scholarships:** Link scholarships to sectors like **AI, healthcare, and manufacturing** to improve employability.
5. **Use of data-driven design:** Institutional and enrolment data should guide **targeted interventions**.
6. **Policy incentives:** Provide **tax benefits and matching funds** to attract private and philanthropic investment.

7. **Performance-linked funding:** Reward institutions for **outcomes in equity, merit, and student success**.
8. **Strengthening SPUs:** Improve funding and quality in SPUs to support the majority of students.
9. **Enhancing digital inclusion:** Expand **online learning, credit transfer, and flexible education systems**.
10. **Integration with academic systems:** Scholarships should be part of **admission, learning, and career pathways**.

Conclusion

India has expanded its higher education system, but participation gaps remain. Scholarships can bridge access, affordability, and quality. They support capable students and improve outcomes. By integrating scholarships into the system, India can achieve higher enrolment, better learning, and stronger national development. Moving scholarships to the centre is essential for inclusive and effective higher education growth.

Question for practice:

Discuss how making scholarships integral to India's academic culture can help achieve equitable access, improve enrolment, and enhance outcomes in higher education.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

A modest plea for constitutional morality

Source: The post "A modest plea for constitutional morality" has been created, based on "A modest plea for constitutional morality" published in "Indian Express" on 11th April 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-2- Governance

Context: Constitutional morality refers to the ethical foundations that sustain constitutional governance through values such as liberty, equality, institutional restraint, pluralism, and procedural respect. The concept has recently become central to debates regarding judicial reasoning in India, especially in cases like the Sabarimala dispute before the Supreme Court of India. Although constitutional morality is sometimes criticised for being vague, it continues to provide an important framework for evaluating the legitimacy of institutional practices and judicial conduct.

Meaning and Nature of Constitutional Morality

- Constitutional morality should be understood not as a strict judicial rule of decision but as a constitutional sensibility guiding interpretation and institutional behaviour.
- It includes values such as judicial self-restraint, respect for pluralism, deference to constitutional procedures, scepticism toward unchecked popular sovereignty, and commitment to open criticism.
- These values strengthen constitutional governance by ensuring that institutions function within the spirit of the Constitution and not merely within its text.

Role of Constitutional Morality in the Sabarimala Case

1. Constitutional morality helps courts frame the correct constitutional questions in disputes involving competing rights and institutional autonomy.
2. In the Sabarimala case, it encourages examination of how liberty and equality can be balanced with the autonomy of religious institutions.
3. It also raises the question of whether exclusionary practices undermine the civic equality and dignity of certain groups.
4. Even when constitutional morality does not provide a definitive answer, it ensures that judicial reasoning remains anchored in constitutional values rather than social prejudices.

Constitutional Morality versus Societal Morality

1. Critics argue that constitutional morality is vague and imposed by courts from above, but societal morality is often even more indeterminate and resistant to rational scrutiny.
2. The invocation of societal morality in constitutional disputes can sometimes function as a device to protect entrenched social practices from constitutional examination.
3. Constitutional morality, by contrast, encourages courts to evaluate practices in light of constitutional commitments to freedom and equality.
4. This approach was evident in cases such as Navtej Singh Johar v Union of India, where constitutional values were used to test discriminatory social norms.

Constitutional Morality as a Standard to Evaluate the Judiciary

1. Constitutional morality also serves as a diagnostic framework for assessing the conduct and consistency of the judiciary itself.
2. It helps identify instances where arbitrariness in judicial processes weakens procedural discipline and predictability in constitutional interpretation.
3. It highlights situations where constitutional protections such as voting rights and freedom of expression appear to receive inconsistent judicial attention.
4. In this way, constitutional morality strengthens accountability within constitutional institutions rather than weakening them.

Concerns Regarding Reactionary Criticism of Constitutional Morality

1. Reactionary criticism of constitutional morality risks weakening constitutional reasoning by dismissing an important normative framework guiding adjudication.
2. Such criticism may create space for insulating social practices from constitutional scrutiny in the name of tradition or majoritarian preference.
3. It may also contribute to uncertainty in constitutional interpretation and undermine the protection of civic equality.
4. Therefore, questioning constitutional morality is legitimate, but rejecting it entirely reflects a misunderstanding of its role in constitutional governance.

Way Forward

1. The judiciary should clarify the scope and limits of constitutional morality so that it is used as a guiding interpretive principle rather than as an undefined substitute for legal reasoning.

2. Courts should ensure that constitutional morality is applied consistently to strengthen predictability and legitimacy in constitutional adjudication.
3. Parliament and constitutional institutions should work to restore a balanced relationship between judicial review and parliamentary sovereignty within the constitutional framework.
4. Legal discourse should focus on strengthening constitutional values such as liberty, equality, and institutional accountability instead of framing constitutional morality as opposed to societal traditions.
5. A principled use of constitutional morality should continue to serve as a safeguard against arbitrariness and as a framework for protecting civic equality in complex constitutional disputes.

Conclusion: Constitutional morality may not always provide direct solutions to constitutional conflicts, but it remains essential as a normative guide for evaluating institutional power and protecting constitutional values. Strengthening its careful and disciplined use can help ensure that constitutional governance remains anchored in liberty, equality, and reason rather than arbitrariness or social prejudice.

Question: Constitutional morality does not always provide direct judicial answers, but it offers a framework to evaluate institutional power and protect civic equality." Discuss with reference to debates around the Sabarimala case.

Source: [Indian Express](#)

Rebuilding ties: On India engaging with Turkiye and Azerbaijan

Source: The post "Rebuilding ties: On India engaging with Turkiye and Azerbaijan" has been created, based on "Rebuilding ties: On India engaging with Turkiye and Azerbaijan" published in "The Hindu" on 11th April 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-2- International relations

Context: India's foreign policy in West Asia and Eurasia is increasingly shaped by strategic and security considerations arising from shifting geopolitical alignments. Recent diplomatic signalling toward Armenia, Azerbaijan and Turkey reflects India's effort to respond to emerging regional partnerships affecting its national security environment. These developments indicate a move toward a more calibrated and interest-based engagement strategy in extended neighbourhood diplomacy.

Emerging Strategic Context Behind India's Diplomatic Signalling

1. India's diplomatic posture toward Turkey and Azerbaijan hardened after statements from these countries appeared supportive of Pakistan during recent security tensions involving India.
2. Azerbaijan's growing defence cooperation with Pakistan has raised concerns within India's strategic community.
3. Turkey's expanding military and political engagement with Pakistan has also contributed to India's reassessment of bilateral engagement priorities.
4. These developments suggest that extra-regional alignments are increasingly influencing India's diplomatic behaviour.

Diplomatic Signalling Through Selective Engagement

1. India's engagement patterns with certain countries shifted following their responses to India's security actions against terrorism infrastructure.
2. Public sentiment in India contributed to a visible decline in tourism flows to Turkey and Azerbaijan, reinforcing diplomatic signalling through societal channels.
3. Such developments demonstrate how domestic opinion increasingly interacts with foreign policy positioning in democratic states.

Strategic Importance of Armenia in India's Regional Approach

1. Armenia is emerging as an important partner for India in the Eurasian region due to converging strategic interests.
2. Strengthening ties with Armenia provides India with an opportunity to counterbalance expanding Turkey-Pakistan cooperation.
3. India's engagement with Armenia also reflects diversification of partnerships in sensitive geopolitical theatres.

Implications for India's Foreign Policy

1. These developments indicate that India is increasingly integrating security concerns into diplomatic engagement strategies.
2. India's foreign policy is gradually shifting toward reciprocity-based partnerships rather than purely historical or economic considerations.
3. India is signalling that support for adversarial positions on core security issues may influence the depth of bilateral engagement.
4. India is also attempting to build alternative strategic partnerships in Eurasia to protect its long-term geopolitical interests.

Challenges for India's Foreign Policy

1. India faces the challenge of balancing its engagement with Armenia while maintaining workable diplomatic relations with Azerbaijan.
2. India must carefully manage relations with Turkey, which remains an important regional power with influence across West Asia and Central Asia.
3. India's connectivity ambitions toward Eurasia may be affected if tensions with regional transit partners increase.
4. Excessive diplomatic distancing from certain countries could reduce India's leverage in multilateral regional platforms.
5. India must avoid allowing geopolitical signalling to negatively affect trade, energy cooperation, and diaspora interests in the region.
6. Managing public sentiment while maintaining strategic flexibility remains a major challenge in democratic foreign policy decision-making.

Way Forward

1. India should deepen defence and strategic cooperation with Armenia to strengthen its presence in Eurasian geopolitics.
2. India should continue calibrated diplomatic engagement with Turkey and Azerbaijan while clearly articulating its security concerns.

3. India should strengthen multilateral engagement through regional platforms to maintain balanced regional diplomacy.
4. India should integrate connectivity initiatives with strategic partnerships to secure long-term access to Eurasian markets.
5. India should continue protecting diaspora interests and ensuring safe evacuation corridors through diversified regional partnerships.
6. India should maintain a pragmatic foreign policy that balances strategic signalling with economic and geopolitical engagement.

Conclusion: India's evolving engagement with Armenia, Azerbaijan and Turkey reflects a pragmatic shift toward security-centred diplomacy in its extended neighbourhood. A balanced approach combining strategic partnerships, calibrated signalling, and sustained regional engagement will remain essential for safeguarding India's long-term geopolitical interests.

Question: India's recent diplomatic signalling involving Armenia, Azerbaijan and Turkey reflects evolving strategic priorities in West Asia and Eurasia. Discuss the implications, challenges, and the way forward for India's foreign policy.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Bolstering Deterrence through Submarine Dominance

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3- Security challenges and their management in border areas .

Introduction

The mention of 'Aridhaman' by Rajnath Singh triggered speculation about the commissioning of India's third SSBN. This follows **INS Arihant (2016)** and **INS Arighat (2024)**. The development reflects India's steady effort to **strengthen sea-based nuclear capability**, which is central to enhancing deterrence in a rapidly changing strategic environment and evolving maritime security landscape.

Evolution of India's SSBN Programme

1. **Early vision and institutional effort:** India began serious work in the late 1970s under Dr Rajaramanna with active involvement of BARC scientists and naval planners to develop nuclear-powered submarines.
2. **Technology learning through leasing:** The leasing of INS Chakra from the Soviet Union in 1988 provided **hands-on training, operational exposure, and a base for indigenous design development.**
3. **Indigenous ATV programme:** The Advance Technology Vessel programme focused on building **indigenous nuclear submarines**, with reactor development at BARC and assembly efforts linked to Kalpakkam, along with Russian design assistance.

4. **Operational progression of SSBNs:** India commissioned **INS Arihant in 2016** and **INS Arighat in 2024**, while **INS Aridhaman is in final trial stages**, and another Arihant-class submarine is expected to be commissioned next.
5. **Upgradation in submarine capability:** INS Aridhaman is a **7000-tonne submarine with higher firepower**, capable of carrying **24 K-15 missiles and 8 K-4/K-5 missiles**, compared to earlier submarines carrying **12 K-15 and 4 K-4 missiles**.

Strengthening Nuclear Triad and Sea-Based Deterrence

1. **Completion of nuclear triad capability:** India now has the ability to launch nuclear weapons from **land, air, and sea**, placing it alongside United States, Russia, China, France, and United Kingdom.
2. **Core principles of nuclear doctrine:** India's doctrine is based on **credibility, survivability, and effectiveness**, ensuring a strong retaliatory capability under its **'no first use' policy**.
3. **Critical importance of sea-based deterrence:** SSBNs provide **high survivability, endurance, flexibility, responsiveness, and connectivity**, making them the most reliable and secure component of deterrence.
4. **Strategic advantage over land-based systems:** Land-based missiles face **infrared detection risks, dependence on road and rail infrastructure, and deployment constraints**, while SSBNs remain hidden and survivable despite higher cost.
5. **Limitations of SSBN platforms:** SSBNs have **limited missile capacity (about 16-18), no immediate reload capability, and reliance on VLF communication systems**, which may be vulnerable but still allow partial connectivity.

Changing Strategic Environment and Multi-Domain Warfare

1. **Rising maritime competition:** Increasing presence of China in the Indian Ocean through research and survey vessels with dual-use capability raises **risks of surveillance and intelligence gathering**, along with concerns from Pakistan.
2. **Transformation of Indian Ocean dynamics:** The region has shifted from **relative dormancy to active strategic contestation**, making maritime deterrence a critical requirement.
3. **Nature of modern warfare:** Conflicts are no longer confined to a single domain and can shift quickly across **land, air, and sea**, requiring integrated deterrence capability.
4. **Global conflict example:** The West Asia conflict shows how air campaigns expanded into maritime tensions, with the **Strait of Hormuz becoming a key strategic point**.
5. **Indian operational experience:** Operation Sindoor demonstrated that even counter-terror responses can have a **potential naval dimension**, highlighting cross-domain interaction.

Self-Reliance and Future Trajectory of Submarine Programme

1. **Boost to defence self-reliance:** The SSBN programme has strengthened India's **indigenous defence production capability and technological base**.
2. **Impact of global conflicts on supply chains:** The Russia-Ukraine war has created **pressure on global defence supply chains**, increasing the need to reduce dependence on Russia.
3. **Future expansion of submarine fleet:** India plans to induct a **fourth Arihant-class submarine** and aims to commission **indigenous SSNs by 2036 and 2038**.
4. **Strategic importance of submarine dominance:** Submarine capability is emerging as a **central pillar of India's deterrence strategy**, and supports the goal of achieving a **blue-water navy and enhanced strategic status**.
5. **Emerging technological and resource challenges:** India must balance **financial resources with expansion needs**, while integrating **Artificial Intelligence and autonomous systems** in submarine design and production, and keeping pace with China's naval growth.

Conclusion

INS Aridhaman strengthens India's **credible, survivable, and effective nuclear deterrence capability**. Sea-based deterrence has become essential in a **multi-domain and contested strategic environment**. The continued focus on indigenous development and submarine expansion reflects a clear strategic direction. Going forward, **balancing resources, adopting advanced technologies, ensuring survivable communication, and matching China's capabilities** will be critical for maintaining deterrence and long-term strategic stability.

Question for practice:

Discuss how India's SSBN programme, particularly the development of INS Aridhaman, strengthens nuclear deterrence and responds to the changing strategic and multi-domain security environment.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Tourism Renaissance

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3- Indian economy and Infrastructure

Introduction

Union Budget 2026-27 marks a **shift from sporadic interventions to a structured, multi-dimensional tourism policy framework** aligned with *Viksit Bharat@2047*. Tourism is now treated as a **civilisational asset and growth engine**, not a peripheral sector. It highlights tourism's role in **employment generation, foreign exchange earnings, and expansion of the local economy**, signalling a major transformation in governance.

India's Tourism Potential

1. **Global Standing and Resource Strength:** India ranks **39th globally (WEF 2024)**, improving from **54th in 2021**, and is among the **top 10 in Natural (6th), Cultural (9th), and Non-Leisure Resources (9th)**, showing strong structural advantages.

2. **Economic Contribution:** Tourism contributes **USD 256 billion to the economy**, reflecting its major economic role.
3. **Employment Generation:** It supports **48 million jobs (9.1% of total employment)**, making it a large employment sector.
4. **High Job Multiplier:** Tourism generates **3.5 times more jobs per rupee invested**, making it highly inclusive.
5. **Core Structural Gap:** The main issue is **poor conversion of resources into global tourism outcomes**, not lack of assets.
6. **Policy Recognition:** Tourism is now officially seen as a **“growth engine”**, aligning policy with economic reality.

Experiential & Heritage Transformation

1. **Shift to Experience Economy:** Tourism policy now focuses on **curated and immersive experiences**, where economic value comes from meaningful engagement rather than passive visits.
2. **Archaeological Site Development:** **15 sites such as Lothal, Dholavira, Rakhigarhi, Sarnath, Hastinapur, and Leh Palace** will be developed into **immersive cultural destinations**, marking a shift in heritage governance.
3. **Buddhist Circuit Expansion:** Development across **six northeastern states** targets a **global Buddhist tourism market**, especially from Japan, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, and China.
4. **Civilisational Assertion:** Sites like **Rakhigarhi, larger than Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa combined**, position India's heritage as a **global civilisational narrative**.

Ecosystem Strengthening: Human Capital & Diversification

1. **Institutional Capacity Building:** **NCHMCT Noida upgraded into a National Institute of Hospitality**, creating a stronger link between academia, industry, and governance.
2. **Human Interface Improvement:** **10,000 guides trained through IIM partnerships across 20 sites**, improving tourist experience, which depends on direct interaction.
3. **Medical Tourism Development:** **Five Regional Medical Hubs** combine **AYUSH, diagnostics, and PPP models**.
4. **Global Market Opportunity:** Medical tourism is a **USD 100 billion global market**, where India has strong advantages.
5. **Sector Diversification:** Promotion of **eco-tourism, wildlife tourism, and nature trails** expands tourism beyond traditional models.

Inclusive & Sustainable Tourism Governance

1. **Sustainability as Market Driver:** Over **70% of global travellers consider sustainability**, making eco-friendly tourism economically important.
2. **Nature and Wildlife Tourism Focus:** Development of **mountain and nature trails across Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, J&K, Araku Valley, and Podhigai Malai**, along with the **Global Big Cat Summit 2026 (95 countries)**, strengthens India's global wildlife tourism position.
3. **Biodiversity Advantage:** India hosts **5 of the world's 7 big cat species**, strengthening its tourism appeal.
4. **Inclusive Tourism Measures:** **MUDRA loans for homestays** promote local participation in tourism.
5. **Accessible Tourism Focus:** **Divyangjan Kaushal Yojana** targets a **USD 58 billion global accessible tourism market**.
6. **Regional Decentralisation:** Focus on **Purvodaya States with 4,000 electric buses under East Coast Industrial Corridor** spreads tourism benefits beyond traditional regions.

Way Forward

1. **Need for Coordinated Implementation:** Effective outcomes require **strong multi-ministry coordination**, as tourism involves infrastructure, culture, and environment.
2. **Infrastructure and Accessibility Gaps:** Improving **last-mile connectivity and tourist infrastructure** is essential to convert potential into experience.
3. **Learning from Global Models:** Approaches similar to **Japan's Tourism Vision, Saudi Vision 2030, and Indonesia's "10 Bali's"** show the importance of structured execution and diversification.
4. **Missing Dimension for Better Conversion:** Stronger focus on **digital enablement and global positioning** is needed to fully utilise India's tourism potential.

Conclusion

Budget 2026–27 provides a **coherent and multi-dimensional tourism framework** with allocation rising to **₹2,438.4 crore from ₹1,310 crore**. It integrates **economic growth, cultural identity, sustainability, and inclusion**. The shift from untapped potential to structured execution marks India's transition toward becoming a **global tourism leader and a civilisational destination**.

Question for practice:

Examine how Union Budget 2026–27 marks a tourism renaissance in India by transforming tourism governance into a structured, multi-dimensional policy framework for inclusive growth and global competitiveness.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Tourism and trade: On the Great Nicobar mega-infrastructure project

Source: The post “Tourism and trade: On the Great Nicobar mega-infrastructure project” has been created, based on “Tourism and trade: On the Great Nicobar mega-infrastructure project” published in “The Hindu” on 13th April 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-2- Governance

Context: The ₹92,000-crore mega-infrastructure project on Great Nicobar Island aims to develop the island into a major port-led trade and tourism hub anchored by an International Container Transshipment Port (ICTP). The project is strategically located near the western entrance of the Malacca Strait, which makes it crucial for India’s maritime security, trade competitiveness, and Indo-Pacific strategy. However, the project has generated concerns regarding ecological sustainability and the protection of indigenous tribal rights.

Strategic and Economic Significance of the Project

1. The project will help India capture a greater share of global container transshipment traffic and reduce dependence on foreign ports such as Singapore and Colombo.
2. The development of an International Container Transshipment Port will strengthen India’s logistics competitiveness and enhance its integration into global maritime trade networks.
3. The project will improve India’s strategic presence near one of the world’s busiest shipping routes, thereby strengthening maritime domain awareness and naval preparedness.
4. The project will support India’s Act East Policy by improving connectivity with Southeast Asian economies.
5. The development of tourism infrastructure, such as seaside tourism, biodiversity tourism, and adventure tourism, will generate large-scale employment opportunities in the region.
6. The project will also improve social infrastructure on the island through investments in healthcare, education, transport, and energy facilities.
7. The project is expected to support long-term regional development by accommodating a projected population increase to over 3.36 lakh by 2055.

Ecological and Social Concerns Associated with the Project

1. The project poses risks to the fragile island ecosystem, including tropical forests and coastal biodiversity that are highly sensitive to large-scale infrastructure development.
2. The construction activities associated with ports, airports, and tourism infrastructure may lead to irreversible environmental degradation in an ecologically vulnerable region.
3. The project has raised concerns regarding the displacement and rehabilitation of indigenous communities such as the Nicobarese and the Shompen.
4. The affected tribal communities have expressed concerns that their forest rights have not been fully settled before project clearances.
5. The proposed relocation plans for local communities have created uncertainty because of contradictions between different draft planning documents.
6. The large-scale projected demographic transformation of the island may threaten the cultural identity and traditional lifestyles of indigenous populations.
7. Although the National Green Tribunal has cited strategic importance while addressing environmental concerns, legal challenges to project clearances remain pending before the Calcutta High Court.
8. Some experts have also questioned the long-term commercial viability of the transshipment port given competition from established regional ports.

Way Forward

1. The government should ensure meaningful consultation with indigenous communities in accordance with constitutional safeguards and principles of participatory governance.

2. The implementation of the project should be supported by robust environmental impact assessments and independent ecological monitoring mechanisms.
3. The project should adopt a phased development approach to balance infrastructure expansion with environmental sustainability.
4. The government should ensure clarity and transparency in rehabilitation and relocation plans for affected communities.
5. The development strategy should promote sustainable tourism models that minimise ecological damage while generating employment opportunities.
6. The government should build a wider consensus among stakeholders to ensure that strategic objectives are achieved without compromising environmental integrity and tribal rights.

Conclusion: The Great Nicobar mega-infrastructure project offers India an important opportunity to strengthen its maritime trade position and strategic presence in the Indo-Pacific region. However, the long-term success of the project depends on balancing national strategic interests with ecological sustainability and protection of indigenous communities through consensus-based development.

Question: The Great Nicobar mega-infrastructure project represents both a strategic opportunity and an ecological challenge for India. Examine its significance and concerns, and suggest a balanced way forward.

Source: The Hindu

Closing the representation gap

Source: The post “Closing the representation gap” has been created, based on “Closing the representation gap” published in “Indian Express” on 13th April 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-2- Governance

Context: The Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam provides for **one-third reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies**, thereby addressing a long-standing structural gap in political representation. The Act represents a major constitutional step toward achieving **gender equality in democratic decision-making institutions**.

Need for Women’s Reservation in Legislatures

1. India continues to face significant underrepresentation of women in legislatures despite improvements in women’s education, economic participation, and social empowerment.
2. Women constituted only about **13.6% of the Lok Sabha members in 2024**, which reflects a decline from earlier levels and highlights the persistence of gender imbalance.
3. Women account for only about **9% of Members of Legislative Assemblies across States**, indicating a wider representation gap at the sub-national level.
4. India ranks low globally in women’s parliamentary representation compared to the global average of around 27%.
5. The mismatch between women’s increasing socio-economic contributions and their limited political participation necessitates structural corrective measures.

Significance of the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam

1. Strengthening political equality

- a. The Act institutionalises gender equality in political representation by ensuring constitutionally guaranteed participation of women in legislative bodies.

- b. It reflects India's transition from welfare-based approaches to **women-led development frameworks**.

2. Building on successful local-level reservation experience

- a. The success of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act and the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act demonstrates that reservations have significantly increased women's participation in grassroots governance.
- b. Nearly **46% of elected representatives in Panchayati Raj Institutions are women**, which shows the effectiveness of reservation as a policy instrument.

3. Improving governance outcomes

- a. Studies have shown that women representatives often prioritise sectors such as **healthcare, education, sanitation, and drinking water**, thereby improving social sector outcomes.
- b. Women's leadership has also been associated with greater transparency and reduced corruption at local governance levels.

4. Creating a political leadership pipeline

- a. Reservation at the grassroots level has helped create a pool of experienced women leaders who can gradually move into State and national legislatures.
- b. The Act strengthens this upward mobility pipeline in political leadership.

5. Enhancing democratic legitimacy

- a. Greater representation of women strengthens participatory democracy by ensuring that legislatures better reflect India's demographic composition.
- b. It improves the inclusiveness and responsiveness of policymaking institutions.

Challenges in Implementation

1. Dependence on delimitation exercise: The implementation of the Act is contingent upon completion of the delimitation exercise, which may delay operationalisation of reservations.

2. Rotation of reserved constituencies: The rotation mechanism may discourage long-term constituency development by elected representatives due to uncertainty regarding future electoral eligibility.

3. Proxy representation risks: There remains a possibility that women representatives may initially function as proxies for male family members in some regions.

4. Structural barriers within political parties: Political parties often hesitate to nominate women candidates even where opportunities exist, which reflects persistent institutional biases.

5. Need for capacity building: Newly elected representatives may require institutional training and leadership support to effectively participate in legislative processes.

Way Forward

- 1. The government should expedite the delimitation process to ensure the timely implementation of reservation provisions.

2. Political parties should voluntarily increase women's candidature beyond the constitutional minimum requirement.
3. Capacity-building programmes should be strengthened through parliamentary training institutions and leadership development initiatives.
4. Greater investment should be made in supporting women's political participation through financial assistance and mentorship networks.
5. Public awareness campaigns should be promoted to encourage acceptance of women's leadership in political institutions.

Conclusion: The Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam represents a historic constitutional reform aimed at correcting gender imbalance in India's legislative institutions. Its effective implementation will ensure that women are not only participants in India's development journey but also equal partners in shaping national policy and democratic governance.

Question: The Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam seeks to address the structural underrepresentation of women in legislatures in India. Examine its significance and discuss the challenges in its implementation.

Source: [Indian Express](#)

To ensure food security amid war clouds, government must reform fertiliser policy

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3- Agriculture

Introduction

Global conflicts such as US–Iran–Israel tensions and the Russia–Ukraine war highlight growing uncertainty in global supply chains. **India faces a major risk due to its ~70% dependence on fertiliser imports and rising global prices.** Food security depends directly on fertiliser availability, and disruptions can affect agricultural output. Natural farming cannot meet large-scale demand. **This situation makes fertiliser policy reform essential to ensure stable supply, efficient use, and long-term food security in the country.**

Strategic Importance of Fertilisers in Indian Agriculture

1. **Critical input for crop productivity:** Fertilisers, along with seeds and irrigation, are essential for higher yields and stable food production.
2. **Economic backbone of agriculture:** Agriculture contributes ~16% to GDP and supports ~46% of the population, making fertilisers vital for livelihoods.
3. **Role in food self-reliance:** Increased fertiliser use after the Green Revolution helped India achieve near self-sufficiency in food production.
4. **India's global standing:** India is the second-largest consumer and third-largest producer of fertilisers, showing its large-scale dependence.
5. **Growth in production capacity:** Fertiliser production rose from 385.39 Lakh Metric Tonnes (LMT) to 503.35 LMT, with 76.2 LMT new capacity added, strengthening domestic supply.

Major Issues with India's Fertiliser Sector

1. **High import dependence:** India depends on imports for ~70% of fertilisers and feedstocks, exposing it to global risks.
2. **Dependence on imported gas for urea production:** Domestic urea production relies on ~85% imported gas, increasing vulnerability.
3. **Excessive use of urea:** Farmers use more than required urea, leading to imbalance.
4. **Distorted pricing system:** Urea is sold at < \$70/tonne while global price is ~\$795/tonne, causing inefficient use and diversion.
5. **Diversion and misuse:** Low prices create arbitrage opportunities, leading to use in non-agricultural sectors and smuggling.
6. **Low Nutrient Use Efficiency (NUE):** Granular urea has only 35–40% efficiency, leading to wastage of nutrients.
7. **Environmental and health impact:** Excess use of nitrogen fertilisers leads to release of **nitrous oxide, which is 273 times more harmful than CO₂** and also contaminates groundwater with nitrates, causing diseases like **blue baby syndrome, thyroid problems, and diabetes.**
8. **Policy bias against efficient fertilisers:** Liquid urea has ~90% NUE but is not subsidised, showing irrational policy.
9. **Inefficient fertiliser composition:** DAP contains 18% nitrogen along with 46% phosphorus, worsening nitrogen overuse.
10. **Lack of TSP production:** No domestic production of TSP with 46% phosphorus, despite need for balanced fertilisation.

Impact of Global Conflicts on Prices and Subsidy Burden

1. **Sharp rise in urea prices:** Urea prices increased by 65% from \$482 to \$795/tonne during conflict period. This directly increases import cost.
2. **Increase in LNG prices:** Gas prices rose by 63% from \$12 to \$19.5/MMBtu, raising production costs. This affects both domestic and imported fertilisers.
3. **Rise in DAP prices:** DAP prices increased by 15% from \$627 to \$720/tonne. This impacts availability of phosphatic fertilisers.
4. **Supply disruptions from key regions:** Limited access from Strait of Hormuz and Gulf countries creates supply uncertainty. This affects timely availability of fertilisers.

5. **Rising subsidy burden:** Fertiliser subsidy increased to ₹1,91,836 crore, creating fiscal pressure. Government absorbs global price shocks.
6. **Price protection for farmers:** Urea price remains fixed at ₹242 per 45 kg bag since 2018. This ensures affordability but increases subsidy burden.

Government Initiatives and Progress

1. **Nutrient Based Subsidy (NBS):** Provides fixed subsidy on P (Phosphorus) and K (Potassium) fertilisers and allows price flexibility for companies.
2. **Fertiliser subsidy support:** The total fertiliser subsidy was raised to ₹1,91,836 crore, reflecting strong government support to protect farmers from global price rise.
3. **Fixed price of urea:** Urea is sold at a fixed price of ₹242 per 45 kg bag, with the government covering the cost difference through subsidy.
4. **Special subsidy for DAP:** A one-time subsidy of ₹3,500 per tonne was provided to keep DAP affordable despite rising global prices.
5. **One Nation One Fertilizer (ONOF):** The government introduced uniform branding as “**Bharat Urea, Bharat DAP, and Bharat NPK**” to ensure quality and reduce confusion among farmers.
6. **Expansion of domestic production:** The government has operationalised six new urea plants, adding 76.2 LMT capacity and increasing domestic production to over 314 LMT.
7. **Nano fertiliser initiatives:** The government promotes nano urea and nano DAP through field demonstrations, awareness campaigns, and availability at PMKSK centres.
8. **Use of technology in application:** Initiatives like Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra and Namu Drone Didi programme promote drone-based spraying of fertilisers.
9. **Neem coated urea programme:** The government mandates neem coating of urea to reduce nitrogen loss and improve efficiency, reducing fertiliser requirement by about 10%.
10. **PM-PRANAM scheme:** This Prime Minister Programme for Restoration, Awareness, Nourishment and Amelioration of Mother Earth (PM-PRANAM) scheme incentivises states to reduce chemical fertiliser use and promotes balanced nutrient application.
11. **Promotion of biofertilisers:** The government supports use of biofertilisers like Rhizobium, Azotobacter, and PSB through research and extension activities.
12. **Soil Health Card scheme:** Farmers are provided soil health cards that test 12 parameters and guide appropriate fertiliser use every two years.

- 13. Digital monitoring systems:** Systems like Integrated Fertilizer Management System (iFMS) and Mobile Fertilizer Management System (mFMS) track fertiliser supply from production to retail and improve transparency in distribution.
- 14. International supply agreements:** India has signed long-term agreements, including 3.1 million tonnes annual DAP supply from Saudi Arabia, and cooperation with Bhutan, Nepal, and Sri Lanka.

Way Forward

- 1. Rationalisation of urea supply:** Reduce supply by 10–15% and allocate based on land records, crop patterns, and recommended doses.
- 2. Quantitative rationing mechanism:** Use Essential Commodities Act to ensure controlled and efficient fertiliser distribution.
- 3. Direct benefit transfer reform:** Provide subsidy directly to farmers on per-acre basis and include tenants who are currently excluded.
- 4. Correction of pricing distortions:** Align fertiliser pricing with efficiency to reduce overuse and diversion.
- 5. Shift towards balanced fertilisation:** Promote use of phosphorus through TSP and reduce excess nitrogen usage.
- 6. Promote domestic production of alternatives:** Incentivise TSP production and collaborate with phosphatic-rich countries.
- 7. Identification of real cultivators:** Accurate identification of landowners and tenants is necessary for effective DBT implementation.

Conclusion

India must treat fertiliser policy as central to food security in an uncertain global environment. **High import dependence, rising prices, and inefficient use create serious risks for agriculture.** Rational pricing, balanced nutrient use, and better targeting of subsidies are essential. **Timely reforms can reduce misuse, improve efficiency, lower fiscal burden, and ensure stable and sustainable food production.**

Question for practice:

Evaluate the need for fertiliser policy reforms in India to ensure food security amid rising global conflicts and supply uncertainties.

Source: [Indian Express](#)

Tapping Fisheries in Reservoirs

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3- Indian economy

Introduction

Tapping fisheries in reservoirs has emerged as a key strategy in Budget 2026–27, which proposes integrated development of **500 reservoirs and Amrit Sarovars** to increase fish farmers' income. India is now the **second-largest fish producer globally**, with **197.75 lakh tonnes production**, and **75% coming from inland fisheries**, making reservoirs a critical resource for livelihood, food security, and economic growth.

Current Status of India's Fisheries Sector

1. **Production growth and global position:** India has become the **second-largest fish and aquaculture producer**, with production rising by **106% since 2013–14 to 197.75 lakh tonnes (2024–25)**.
2. **Dominance of inland fisheries:** About **75% of total production** comes from inland fisheries including freshwater, brackish, and saline water resources.
3. **Economic contribution and growth rate:** The sector has recorded an average growth of **7.87% since 2014–15**, with GVA increasing from **₹98,190 crore to ₹3.41 lakh crore**.
4. **Employment and livelihood support:** Fisheries support nearly **3 crore livelihoods**, including **over 50 lakh coastal community members**.
5. **Export performance:** Seafood exports have doubled from **₹30,213 crore to ₹62,408 crore**, strengthening India's global presence.

Significance of Reservoir Fisheries

1. **Large resource base:** Reservoirs cover **31.5 lakh hectares**, producing around **18 lakh tonnes of fish**, showing high untapped potential.
2. **Regional importance:** These reservoirs are mainly located in **eastern, central, and peninsular regions**, supporting local economies.
3. **Livelihood support in vulnerable areas:** Reservoir fisheries provide **direct and indirect employment in economically backward and water-scarce regions**.
4. **State-wise distribution:** **Madhya Pradesh has the largest reservoir area (~6 lakh ha)**, while **Tamil Nadu has over 8,000 reservoirs**.
5. **Food security and nutrition:** These fisheries contribute to **affordable protein supply** and improve food availability.

Development of India's Fisheries Sector

1. **Improvement in productivity:** Reservoir productivity increased from **50 kg/ha (2006) to 100 kg/ha**, showing effective technological adoption.
2. **Role of cage culture technology:** Floating or stationary cages allow **natural water flow, better oxygen exchange, and efficient feeding and monitoring**.

3. **Species diversification:** Stocking includes **Indian major carps (Catla, Rohu, Mrigal)** along with **Tilapia and Pangasius** based on need.
4. **Design and efficiency of cages:** Cages made of **synthetic mesh** are anchored or buoyed, ensuring stability and ease of disease management.
5. **Potential for higher productivity:** Studies show productivity can increase up to **300 kg/ha**, indicating scope for further growth.

Government Initiatives

1. **Budgetary support and schemes:** Budget 2026–27 provides **₹2,761.80 crore**, with **₹2,530 crore for schemes**, and Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana receiving **₹2,500 crore**.
2. **Integrated reservoir development:** Focus on **500 reservoirs and Amrit Sarovars** to improve income and strengthen the fisheries value chain.
3. **Mission Amrit Sarovar expansion:** **68,827 ponds developed**, including **1,222 used for fisheries**, each with **minimum 1 acre area and 10,000 m³ capacity**.
4. **Cluster-based approach:** National Fisheries Development Board is implementing clusters like **Halalai and Indra Sagar dams** to improve efficiency and scale.
5. **Value chain strengthening:** Development includes **hatcheries, feed mills, storage, ice plants, auction centres, and transport systems**.
6. **Support to institutions and startups:** Around **200 start-ups supported** and **34 clusters developed**, benefiting nearly **50 lakh people**.
7. **Export promotion measures:** Duty-free fish catch in **EEZ and high seas**, and increase in duty-free import limit from **1% to 3%** for processing inputs.

Challenges Remains

1. **Fragmented governance:** Multiple agencies control fishing rights, creating **data and management challenges**.
2. **Infrastructure gaps:** Lack of **cold storage, transport, and processing facilities** affects value addition.
3. **Limited market access:** Weak linkages reduce **price realisation for fish farmers**.
4. **Need for skill and technology adoption:** Capacity-building and training are required for **efficient use of modern technologies**.
5. **Underutilised productivity potential:** Current productivity is **100 kg/ha**, while potential is **300 kg/ha**, showing a large gap.

Conclusion

Tapping reservoir fisheries offers strong potential for **income generation, food security, and export growth**. With **higher budget allocation, value chain development, and cluster-based strategies**, the sector can achieve higher productivity and efficiency. Strengthening infrastructure, institutions, and market linkages will be key to ensuring **sustainable growth and livelihood security** in line with **Viksit Bharat@2047 vision**.

Question for practice:

Discuss how the integrated development of reservoir fisheries, supported by Budget 2026–27 initiatives, can enhance productivity, livelihoods, and value chain efficiency in India’s fisheries sector.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

National Agriculture Market (e-NAM)

Source: The post “**National Agriculture Market (e-NAM)**” has been created, based on “**National Agriculture Market (e-NAM)**” published in “**PIB**” on **14th April 2026**.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-3- Economy

Context: The National Agriculture Market (e-NAM) is a pan-India electronic trading platform launched in April 2016 to integrate Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) mandis into a unified national agricultural market. The platform aims to improve price discovery, enhance transparency, promote inter-state agricultural trade, and increase farmers’ access to competitive markets through digital technology. The initiative represents a major step toward achieving the vision of “One Nation, One Market” in agricultural marketing.

Key Achievements of e-NAM

1. As of March 2026, a total of **1,656 mandis across 23 States and 4 Union Territories** have been integrated with the e-NAM platform.
2. More than **1.80 crore farmers, 2.73 lakh traders, and 4,724 Farmer-Producer Organisations (FPOs)** have been registered on the platform.
3. The platform has facilitated cumulative trade of **13.25 crore metric tonnes of agricultural produce worth ₹4.84 lakh crore** between 2016 and March 2026.
4. The trade value increased significantly from **₹3.19 lakh crore in 2024 to ₹4.84 lakh crore in 2026**, which reflects deeper market engagement.
5. The mobile application provides price information for **247 commodities**, which helps farmers make informed marketing decisions.
6. The government provides financial assistance of up to **₹75 lakh per mandi** to strengthen digital infrastructure under the platform.

Key Features of e-NAM

1. **Digital end-to-end agricultural marketing platform**
 - a. The e-NAM portal enables digital gate entry, lot creation with unique identifiers, quality assaying, online bidding, price discovery, and direct electronic payment to farmers.
 - b. The platform provides real-time dashboards displaying commodity-wise arrivals, mandi-level price trends, and trade flows across states.

2. Promotion of inter-state agricultural trade

- a. The platform enables traders to participate in inter-state bidding through unified licensing systems.
- b. The platform helps farmers access a wider pool of buyers beyond their local mandis.

3. Mobile application support

- a. The e-NAM mobile application allows farmers and traders to access price information and trading services from remote locations.
- b. The application improves accessibility of market information through multilingual interfaces.

4. Platform of Platforms (PoP)

- a. The Platform of Platforms integrates logistics, warehousing, grading, packaging, crop advisory, financial services, insurance services, and weather updates into one digital interface.
- b. The platform strengthens linkages across the agricultural value chain.

5. Digital payment ecosystem

- a. The e-NAM platform supports electronic payment through UPI, NEFT, RTGS, and internet banking.
- b. The platform ensures the timely, secure, and transparent transfer of sale proceeds directly into farmers' bank accounts.

6. Integration with warehouse receipt system

- a. The Electronic Negotiable Warehouse Receipt (e-NWR) system enables farmers to store produce in accredited warehouses and sell it later through the e-NAM platform.
- b. The integration reduces post-harvest losses, minimises distress sales, and allows farmers to access institutional credit using warehouse receipts as collateral.

Benefits of e-NAM

1. Improved price discovery: The platform enables transparent price discovery through competitive online bidding across multiple markets. Farmers receive better remuneration due to access to a larger number of buyers.

2. Reduction in role of intermediaries: The platform reduces dependence on middlemen and commission agents in agricultural marketing. Farmers gain stronger bargaining power in price negotiations.

3. Increased transparency in agricultural markets: The platform improves transparency through real-time price information and digital tracking of transactions. The system reduces malpractices and cartelization among traders.

4. Expansion of market access: Farmers gain access to national-level markets beyond their local mandis. Farmer-Producer Organisations benefit from collective marketing opportunities.

5. Promotion of digital payments and financial inclusion: Direct electronic payment improves transaction security and reduces delays. Digital transaction records improve farmers' access to institutional credit.

6. Promotion of quality-based trading: The availability of assaying facilities encourages grading-based pricing of agricultural commodities. Quality-based trading improves trust between buyers and sellers.

7. Reduction in transaction costs: The platform reduces multiple handling charges and market fees through digital integration. Farmers benefit from lower transaction risks and improved efficiency.

Challenges in Implementation of e-NAM

1. Digital literacy constraints

- a. Many farmers lack adequate digital literacy to effectively use registration, lot identification, assaying, and online bidding services.
- b. Small and marginal farmers face difficulties in using smartphones and internet-based platforms.

2. Infrastructure limitations

- a. Poor internet connectivity in rural areas limits effective participation on the platform.
- b. Inadequate grading of laboratories, storage facilities, and rural transport infrastructure reduces operational efficiency.

3. Fragmentation of APMC regulations

- a. Differences in state-level mandi regulations and licensing systems continue to restrict seamless inter-state trade.
- b. Multiple market fees and commissions increase transaction costs.

4. Limited trader participation

- a. In some mandis, participation of traders remains limited, which reduces competition in price discovery.
- b. Cartelization among traders still exists in certain local markets.

5. Lack of awareness among farmers

- a. Many farmers are not fully aware of the benefits and operational features of the platform.
- b. Inadequate extension support and weak advertisement campaigns affect adoption levels.

6. Trust deficit in digital payment systems

- a. Some farmers prefer cash payments to meet immediate consumption needs.
- b. Farmers sometimes fear deduction of loan repayments from bank-transferred sale proceeds.

7. Operational complexity: Farmers often find the registration process and e-auction procedures complex during the initial stages of adoption.

Way Forward

1. Strengthening digital infrastructure

- a. The government should improve rural internet connectivity and ensure access to affordable digital devices for farmers.
- b. Digital service centres should be expanded at the village level to support platform usage.

2. Expanding awareness and training programs

- a. Targeted awareness campaigns should be conducted to educate farmers about registration, assaying, bidding, and payment procedures.
- b. Capacity-building programs should be organised particularly for small and marginal farmers.

3. Reforming APMC regulations

- a. Greater harmonisation of state-level APMC laws is required to enable seamless inter-state agricultural trade.
- b. A unified licensing system should be strengthened further.

4. Improving market infrastructure

- a. The government should expand grading laboratories, warehouses, cold storage facilities, and logistics networks.
- b. Strengthening post-harvest infrastructure will improve the efficiency of digital agricultural trade.

5. Increasing participation of traders and private players

- a. Incentives should be provided to increase trader participation on the platform.
- b. Greater integration with private agri-market platforms and e-commerce players should be promoted.

6. Strengthening the role of Farmer-Producer Organisations

- a. Farmer-Producer Organisations should be encouraged to aggregate produce and participate actively in digital trading.
- b. Institutional support should be provided to enhance their market linkages.

Conclusion: The e-NAM platform represents a transformative reform in agricultural marketing by improving transparency, expanding market access, and promoting digital payments across mandis. Continued investment in infrastructure, digital literacy, institutional reforms, and stakeholder participation will help the platform significantly improve farmers' income and strengthen the agricultural marketing ecosystem in India.

Question: The National Agriculture Market (e-NAM) is a major step toward the digital transformation of agricultural marketing in India. Discuss its achievements, benefits, challenges, and suggest measures to improve its effectiveness.

Source: [PIB](#)

Why do FPIs keep selling?

Source: The post “Why do FPIs keep selling?” has been created, based on “Why do FPIs keep selling?” published in “Business Standard” on 14th April 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-3- Economy

Context: Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) have withdrawn more than **\$45 billion since October 2024**, and their ownership in Indian equities has fallen to a **15-year low**. The reasons are largely structural, valuation-based, and global portfolio allocation-driven.

The reason behind FPIs continuing to sell Indian equities

1. High valuation premium of Indian markets

- a. FPIs believe that Indian equity markets continue to trade at nearly a **50 percent premium compared to emerging market averages**.
- b. Investors question why they should invest in India at **high valuation multiples with moderate earnings growth of 10–15 percent**.
- c. The valuation compression since 2024 indicates declining investor confidence in future growth expectations.

2. Availability of alternative investment destinations globally

- a. Earlier, India was seen as the most attractive emerging market investment destination.
- b. However, investors are now reallocating funds toward markets such as China, South Korea, Taiwan, and Brazil.
- c. These markets currently offer **lower valuations and stronger sectoral earnings prospects**, especially in the technology and manufacturing sectors.

3. Revival of investment attractiveness in China

- a. Global investors earlier avoided China due to geopolitical risks and regulatory uncertainty.
- b. However, renewed policy stability and leadership in sectors such as **electric vehicles, renewables, robotics, and artificial intelligence** have improved investor confidence.
- c. As a result, portfolio flows have partially shifted back toward China.

4. Concerns regarding moderate earnings growth in India

- a. Many investors believe that India’s corporate earnings growth is structurally limited to **10–15 percent annually**.
- b. Major sectors such as **IT services, private banking, consumer staples, and pharmaceuticals** are not showing strong acceleration in earnings growth.
- c. Investors are therefore questioning the sustainability of India’s earlier “high growth premium”.

5. Limited presence in sunrise technology sectors

- a. Investors perceive that India does not yet dominate any major global sunrise sector such as **semiconductors, advanced artificial intelligence, or robotics**.

- b. Even traditional strengths such as IT services face disruption risks from artificial intelligence automation.
- c. This weakens India's long-term innovation narrative in global portfolios.

6. Slower-than-expected progress in manufacturing expansion

- a. Global investors expected India to benefit strongly from the **China-plus-one strategy**.
- b. However, manufacturing inflows from multinational corporations have grown more slowly than expected.
- c. As a result, foreign direct investment flows have remained relatively stagnant.

7. Regulatory and ease-of-doing-business concerns

- a. Investors continue to perceive India as a complex regulatory environment with tax uncertainties.
- b. These concerns become more important when returns moderate.
- c. FPIs, therefore, prefer markets with simpler regulatory systems.

8. Artificial intelligence risks to India's service-led growth model

- a. India's competitive advantage has historically been based on skilled white-collar labour.
- b. Artificial intelligence threatens the **billable-hours model of IT services exports**.
- c. This creates uncertainty regarding long-term earnings sustainability.

9. Relative underperformance versus emerging markets

- a. Indian equity markets have underperformed emerging market indices by nearly **5,000 basis points**.
- b. Such relative underperformance encourages global investors to rebalance portfolios toward better-performing regions.

10. Portfolio rebalancing after earlier overweight positions

- a. India earlier represented a large share of emerging market allocations because investors had limited alternatives.
- b. As other emerging markets improved their attractiveness, investors reduced their overweight exposure to India.
- c. This adjustment led to sustained FPI outflows.

Reason behind domestic markets remaining stable despite FPI selling

- 1. Strong participation from domestic institutional investors has supported market stability.
- 2. Rising retail investor participation through mutual funds and SIPs has offset foreign selling pressures.
- 3. India's macroeconomic stability continues to provide a cushion against volatility.

Way forward to restore FPI confidence

1. Strengthening the innovation ecosystem

- a. India should increase investment in **research and development and advanced technology sectors**.
- b. Policy support for semiconductor manufacturing and AI industries should be expanded.

2. Accelerating manufacturing competitiveness

- a. Faster implementation of Production Linked Incentive (PLI) schemes can attract multinational companies.
- b. Infrastructure improvements should reduce logistics costs.

3. Improving ease of doing business

- a. Simplifying taxation systems and regulatory compliance will improve investor sentiment.
- b. Faster dispute resolution mechanisms can enhance confidence.

4. Expanding capital market depth

- a. Encouraging the listing of new-age technology companies can diversify market composition.
- b. Deeper corporate bond markets can strengthen financial stability.

5. Maintaining macroeconomic stability: Sustained GDP growth, fiscal discipline, and inflation control remain essential for restoring investor confidence.

Conclusion: FPI selling from India is largely driven by **valuation concerns, global portfolio reallocation, moderate earnings expectations, and technology-sector competitiveness issues**. However, strong domestic participation and India's long-term structural growth potential suggest that the current negative sentiment may be cyclical rather than permanent.

Question: Why have Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) been reducing their investments in India despite strong domestic flows? Examine the reasons and suggest measures to restore investor confidence.

Source: [Business Standards](#)

The Fallout of the West Asia Crisis on India's Economy

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3- Indian economy

Introduction

The ongoing Russia-Ukraine war and the West Asia crisis have disrupted global energy supply chains. A partial blockade of the Strait of Hormuz has affected crude oil, gas and fertilizer flows. Prices have risen sharply. Even after a temporary ceasefire, supply chains may take time to stabilise. India, with nearly **90% import dependence on crude**, faces serious economic risks.

Mechanisms of Transmission of the Crisis to India

1. **Energy price shock:** Global crude prices increased sharply, and this was reflected in the Indian crude basket, which rose by **over 64.5% in March 2026 compared to February**. This shows that India is directly affected by global price movements.
2. **High import dependence:** India imports crude oil from **41 countries**, but its dependence has reached nearly **90%**, making it highly vulnerable to external shocks and supply disruptions.

3. **Supply chain disruptions:** Disruptions in production, storage and transport of crude oil, gas and fertilizers have reduced availability of key inputs, affecting multiple sectors of the economy.
4. **Rising logistics costs:** Transport and storage require large amounts of energy, so higher fuel prices increase logistics costs. This leads to higher prices of final goods across sectors.
5. **Financial transmission pressures:** Global uncertainty has triggered capital outflows and increased demand for dollars, which has weakened the rupee and increased import costs further.

Domestic Economic Implications on Production, Agriculture and Prices

1. **Impact on energy-intensive sectors:** Industries such as textiles, chemicals, fertilizers, cement and tyres depend heavily on energy inputs. Supply disruptions increase their production costs and reduce output.
2. **Cascading effects across industries:** Disruptions in key sectors spread to other industries through supply chains, affecting overall industrial production and economic activity.
3. **Agricultural impact through fertilizers:** Shortage of fertilizers and chemicals may reduce agricultural productivity. This is critical as the **Kharif season begins in June**, making timely availability essential.
4. **Cost-push inflation across sectors:** Higher input and logistics costs increase the prices of goods and services. This leads to inflation, especially in sectors directly linked to energy.

External Sector Implications on Trade, Exchange Rate and Remittances

1. **Export slowdown due to global conditions:** India's exports are affected by disruptions in West Asia and slowdown in major economies like the U.S. and Europe, reducing demand for Indian goods.
2. **High dependence on West Asia markets:** West Asia accounts for **16.4% of India's merchandise exports (2024-25)**, so instability in the region directly affects export performance.
3. **Exchange rate depreciation pressures:** Rising import bills due to high crude prices increase demand for dollars. This puts pressure on the rupee, leading to depreciation.
4. **Capital outflows worsening currency weakness:** Net FPI outflows of **\$13.6 billion in March 2026** reflect investor uncertainty. This further weakens the rupee and affects financial stability.
5. **Declining remittances from Gulf countries:** Many Indians work in Gulf countries, and economic slowdown there may reduce remittance inflows. This adds pressure on India's external balance.

Macroeconomic Implications on Growth, Inflation, Fiscal Balance and Current Account

1. **Widening current account deficit:** Rising import bills and falling export earnings increase the current account deficit. This weakens the overall external position of the economy.

2. **Rising inflationary pressures:** Increase in prices of petroleum products, fertilizers and other inputs leads to cost-push inflation. If liquidity increases, inflationary pressure may spread further.
3. **Growth slowdown due to high crude prices:** According to RBI estimates, every **10% rise in crude price reduces GDP growth by about 15 basis points**, indicating a strong negative impact.
4. **Inflation increase due to price pass-through:** The same increase in crude prices raises inflation by **30 basis points**, showing that price shocks directly affect consumers.
5. **Severe macroeconomic impact scenario:** With crude at **\$120.28 per barrel**, GDP growth may fall by about **1 percentage point**, while inflation may rise by **more than 2 percentage points**.
6. **Fiscal stress due to subsidies and revenue loss:** Government may need to increase subsidies for petroleum, fertilizers and food. At the same time, reduced excise duties lower revenue.
7. **Large revenue loss estimates:** The net loss is about **₹5,500 crore per fortnight**, which can lead to an annual loss of **₹1.32 lakh crore** if the crisis continues.
8. **Pressure on state finances:** Lower economic activity reduces tax collections and devolution. States may also need to cut VAT on fuel, increasing fiscal stress.

Way Forward

1. **Allowing fuel price adjustment:** Retail fuel prices should be increased when global crude prices remain high. This helps reduce subsidy burden and fiscal pressure.
2. **Avoiding excess liquidity expansion:** Increasing liquidity in the system may worsen inflation. Hence, monetary discipline is required to control price rise.
3. **Reconsidering tax reductions on fuel:** Reduction in excise duty leads to large revenue losses. It needs to be reviewed carefully based on fiscal needs.
4. **Rising subsidy burden pressure:** Food, fertilizer and petroleum subsidies are expected to exceed budget estimates, increasing fiscal stress.

Conclusion

The West Asia crisis has created **wide-ranging economic challenges** for India through energy shocks, supply disruptions and financial instability. It affects production, inflation, trade and fiscal balance simultaneously. The extent of impact depends on how long the crisis continues. A quick resolution may reduce pressures, but a prolonged crisis can significantly slow growth and increase inflation in the economy.

Question for practice:

Discuss the economic impact of the West Asia crisis on India through its transmission channels and macroeconomic consequences..

Source: [The Hindu](#)

India Moving Up the Pharma Value Chain

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3- Indian economy

Introduction

India has emerged as the “Pharmacy of the World” through affordable and quality generic medicines. However, biologics, biosimilars, and specialty drugs now account for over 40% of global pharmaceutical revenues. This shift is pushing India to move up the pharma value chain towards innovation and high-value therapeutics. Government policies are now focused on building scientific capacity, strengthening research, and expanding advanced manufacturing, while ensuring affordability and maintaining global leadership in generic drug supply.

Current Status of India’s Pharma Industry

- 1. Global leadership in generics and vaccines:** India supplies around 20% of global generic medicines and leads in vaccines like Diphtheria, Tetanus, Pertussis (DPT), Bacillus Calmette–Guérin (BCG), and measles.
- 2. Strong industrial base and scale:** The industry ranks 3rd globally by volume and 11th by value, with over 3,000 companies and 10,500 manufacturing units.
- 3. Growing domestic market and turnover:** The domestic market is valued at USD 60 billion and is expected to reach USD 130 billion by 2030, with turnover of ₹4.72 lakh crore in FY25.
- 4. Export expansion and global reach:** Pharmaceutical exports reached USD 30.5 billion in 2024-25, with exports to 191 countries, showing strong global demand.
- 5. Presence in regulated markets:** Around 50% of exports go to regulated markets like the United States and Europe, reflecting high quality standards.
- 6. Diversified export destinations:** Exports are spread across countries like Nigeria, Brazil, Saudi Arabia, and France, reducing dependence on limited markets.
- 7. Rising foreign investment:** The sector attracts strong Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), with inflows of ₹13,193 crore in 2025-26, showing investor confidence.
- 8. API manufacturing strength:** India has around 500 Active Pharmaceutical Ingredient (API) manufacturers, contributing nearly 8% of the global API industry.

Transition Towards Innovation and Value Addition

- 1. Shift from generics to innovation:** The industry is moving from generic drug manufacturing to innovation-driven drug discovery and advanced therapies.
- 2. Biopharma SHAKTI initiative:** The Strategy for Healthcare Advancement through Knowledge, Technology and Innovation (SHAKTI) with an outlay of ₹10,000 crore aims to build capacity in biologics and biosimilars.

3. **Strengthening R&D ecosystem:** Schemes like Promotion of Research and Innovation in Pharma MedTech Sector (PRIP) and BioNEST support research and innovation.
4. **Focus on scientific capability:** Efforts are being made to build deep scientific research capacity and innovation-based enterprises.

Domestic Manufacturing and Research Capacity

1. **Fermentation-based manufacturing push:** India is strengthening fermentation-based manufacturing for antibiotics, vaccines, enzymes, and biologics to reduce long-standing import dependence.
2. **API and KSM localisation:** Production Linked Incentive (PLI) schemes and Bulk Drug Parks are expanding domestic capacity for Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (APIs) and Key Starting Materials (KSMs).
3. **Clinical trial ecosystem expansion:** The plan to establish 1,000 accredited clinical trial sites will strengthen India's position in global drug development.
4. **Cost advantage and skilled workforce:** India offers low-cost clinical trials and skilled investigators, making it an attractive destination for research.

Government Initiatives and Policy Support

1. **PLI schemes for manufacturing growth:** Production Linked Incentive (PLI) schemes have reduced imports by ₹3,591 crore and strengthened domestic manufacturing.
2. **Bulk drug and medical device parks:** Three bulk drug parks and three medical device parks are being developed to improve infrastructure.
3. **PRIP and research promotion:** Under Promotion of Research and Innovation in Pharma MedTech Sector (PRIP), 7 Centres of Excellence and over 111 research projects support innovation.
4. **Affordable medicine access:** The Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana (PMBJP) runs over 18,000 Jan Aushadhi Kendras, reducing medicine costs.
5. **Trade agreements boosting exports:** Agreements with the European Union (EU), United Kingdom (UK), and New Zealand provide better market access.

Regulatory Strength and Quality Assurance

1. **Strong regulatory institutions:** The Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) regulates drugs and clinical trials to ensure safety and quality.

2. **Drug pricing and monitoring:** The National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) controls drug prices under the Drugs Prices Control Order (DPCO), 2013.
3. **Standardisation and pharmacopoeia:** The Indian Pharmacopoeia Commission (IPC) sets standards for drug quality and is recognised in 19 countries.
4. **Global confidence in quality:** India has the highest number of United States Food and Drug Administration (USFDA) approved plants outside the USA.
5. **Regulatory reforms for ease of business:** Digitalisation, faster approvals, and harmonisation improve efficiency and global competitiveness.

Key Challenges

1. **Low R&D investment:** Investment in research and development is still low, affecting innovation capacity.
2. **Need for stronger collaboration:** More public-private partnerships are required to sustain innovation and research.
3. **Import dependence in key areas:** Some segments like fermentation-based products still rely on imports.
4. **Balancing innovation with affordability:** Advanced therapies may increase costs, so ensuring affordable access remains important.

Conclusion

India's pharmaceutical sector is steadily moving up the value chain from generics to innovation-driven growth. Strong policy support, expanding research capacity, and rising global integration are enabling this transition. With focus on advanced therapeutics, domestic manufacturing, and affordability, India is well positioned to emerge as a global leader in biopharma innovation while sustaining its role as a reliable supplier of essential medicines.

Question for practice:

Evaluate how India is moving up the pharmaceutical value chain towards innovation-driven growth.

Source: [Businessline](#) and [PIB](#)

Mapping the Legislative Vacuum in India's Heat Crisis

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3- Disaster management

Introduction

India's heat crisis has shifted from a seasonal issue to a **systemic national emergency**, now affecting over **57% of districts**. Heatwaves have expanded beyond traditional regions and now impact diverse geographies. However, the burden is unequal, falling heavily on informal workers. Despite strong scientific evidence, governance remains weak. The real crisis lies in a **legislative, administrative, and fiscal vacuum** that fails to ensure protection and justice.

Nature of the Nationwide Heat Crisis

1. **Geographic expansion of heatwaves:** Heatwaves, once confined to the northwest and central plains, now extend to humid coastal and temperate regions, showing a clear nationwide spread of extreme heat conditions.
2. **Rising intensity and frequency of heat:** The last two years have recorded unprecedented temperatures, indicating that heat is no longer seasonal but a recurring and structural challenge.
3. **Scale of exposure across districts:** More than 57% of Indian districts are classified as heat-prone, which shows that a majority of regions are now under regular heat stress.

Impacts of the Nationwide Heat Crisis

1. **Thermal inequality across society:** While heat covers the entire country, its impact is unequal, as the affluent manage it through cooling systems, whereas 400–490 million informal workers face severe exposure and risk to life.
2. **Lack of cooling autonomy among workers:** Workers such as construction labourers, street vendors, and delivery agents have no control over their work conditions, which makes them continuously exposed to extreme heat.
3. **Decline in productivity and income:** Studies show that even a small rise in temperature causes a significant fall in productivity and earnings, forcing workers to choose between health and livelihood.
4. **Sector-specific occupational vulnerabilities:** Construction workers face heat from physical labour and materials, while gig workers face algorithm-driven pressure that discourages rest even during heat alerts.
5. **Climate-caste nexus in exposure:** Sanitation workers and waste pickers work in micro-climates up to 5% hotter, which shows that socially marginalised groups face higher heat risks.

The Core Issue: Legislative and Policy Vacuum

1. **Outdated labour law coverage:** The Factories Act, 1948 protects only indoor workers, excluding those most exposed to heat.
2. **Weak provisions in OSHWC Code, 2020:** Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions (OSHC) Code, 2020, section 23 allows the government to notify heat standards, but does not make them mandatory, resulting in absence of enforceable safety norms.

3. **Exclusion of heatwaves from disaster list:** Heatwaves are not included in the Notified Disaster list, which restricts access to national-level funding and coordinated response.
4. **Fiscal limitation through '10% trap':** States can use only 10% of State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF) for heat-related relief, which is inadequate for addressing a large-scale crisis.
5. **Dependence on advisory-based governance:** Most policies remain non-binding advisories, which lack accountability and fail to ensure implementation on the ground.
6. **Exclusion of informal and gig workers:** Informal workers and gig workers remain outside formal legal protections, which increases their vulnerability during extreme heat.

Policy and Legal Reforms

1. **Inclusion in Notified Disaster list:** Heatwaves should be included in the Notified National Disaster list for the 2026–31 period, as recommended by the Finance Commission. This will allow States to access National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF) support and remove current funding limits, while also making heat alerts legally binding for administrative action instead of simple advisories.
2. **Adoption of Heat Index as standard:** Using Heat Index (temperature and humidity) will provide a more accurate measure of risk, especially for coastal and humid regions.
3. **Mandatory labour safety rules:** Binding rules like work-rest cycles and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) provision must be enforced under OSHWC Code.
4. **Recognition of 'Right to Cool':** Declaring it as a fundamental right under Article 21 will ensure access to cooling shelters and public water facilities.
5. **Protection for high-risk occupations:** Special directives are required for sanitation workers and mining workers, as they face combined risks of heat and toxic exposure.
6. **Regulation of gig economy platforms:** Platforms should not impose penalties during heat alerts, ensuring worker safety.
7. **Provision for income compensation:** Workers must receive financial support for heat-induced work loss.
8. **Adoption of insurance-based models:** Parametric heat insurance schemes provide a **practical model for compensating heat-related losses.**

Governance Gaps and Implementation Failures

1. **Ineffective Heat Action Plans:** Heat Action Plans exist but lack **enforcement mechanisms and accountability**, reducing them to weak policy tools.
2. **Absence of vulnerability mapping:** Most plans fail to identify high-risk groups and regions, which leads to poor targeting of interventions.

3. **Failure in last-mile communication:** Heat alerts often do not reach workers on time, especially in rural areas, limiting their ability to take preventive action.
4. **Lack of trained local response systems:** Local workers like ASHA and panchayat officials lack training and defined roles, weakening response systems.
5. **Unaddressed economic losses:** A 1°C rise reduces income by 16%, and earnings fall by 40% during peak heat, with no compensation mechanisms in place.

Way Forward

1. **Reframing heat as workplace risk:** Heat must be treated as an occupational safety issue, not only a disaster event.
2. **Forced survival dilemma for workers:** Workers must choose between health survival and economic survival, showing systemic injustice.
3. **Strengthening last-mile communication:** Alerts must reach workers before work begins, especially during red-alert conditions.
4. **Ensuring institutional accountability:** Clear responsibilities must be defined across administrative levels.
5. **Integrating scientific tools in policy:** Heat Index must be used in public communication and decision-making.
6. **Expanding disaster finance access:** Full use of SDRF and NDRF is needed for effective response.
7. **Adopting worker-centric governance:** Policies must prioritise most exposed and vulnerable workers.

Conclusion

India's heat crisis exposes a deeper **failure of governance and legal protection**, not a lack of scientific understanding. Weak laws, limited funding, and poor implementation leave vulnerable workers unprotected. Addressing this requires closing the legislative vacuum through enforceable rights, adequate financing, and accountable systems, ensuring that thermal safety becomes an essential part of **occupational justice and constitutional protection**.

Question for practice:

Discuss how India's heat crisis reflects a legislative and governance vacuum, and examine its impact on vulnerable workers.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Obesity Epidemic in India

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 2- Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health.

Introduction

India is facing a growing obesity crisis linked with rising metabolic diseases like diabetes and hypertension. Nearly **one-fourth of the population is overweight or obese**, with childhood obesity rising rapidly. Alongside lifestyle changes, there is an increasing shift toward pharmaceutical solutions, raising concerns about **medicalisation, market influence, and neglect of root causes** in addressing long-term public health.

What is Obesity?

1. **Meaning:** Obesity is defined as **abnormal or excessive fat accumulation** that increases health risks and leads to diseases like diabetes and heart conditions.
2. **Measurement through BMI:** The most common screening tool is **Body Mass Index (BMI)**, used to classify overweight and obesity levels.
3. **Health risks associated:** It increases the risk of **diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular diseases, and certain cancers**, making it a major public health issue.

Rising Burden and Changing Epidemiology

1. **Increasing prevalence in population:** Nearly **25% of Indians are overweight or obese**, showing a sharp rise over recent decades.
2. **Gender-wise increase:** Obesity in women increased from **1.2% (1990) to 9.8% (2022)** with **44 million women affected**, while **26 million men** are also obese.
3. **Childhood obesity surge:** Obese boys increased from **0.2 million to 7.3 million**, and girls from **0.2 million to 5.2 million**, showing a serious trend.
4. **High burden of related diseases:** Around **1 in 10 adults has diabetes** and **1 in 3 has hypertension**, along with fatty liver disease.
5. **Thin-fat phenotype in Indians:** Indians tend to have **higher body fat despite lean appearance**, increasing health risks even at lower BMI.

Underlying Causes of Obesity in India

1. **Unhealthy lifestyle patterns:** Lack of physical activity, poor sleep, and stress have increased due to urban lifestyles and work patterns.
2. **Shift in dietary habits:** People are consuming more **processed, high fat, salt, and sugar foods**, while spending less on nutritious items like cereals and pulses.

3. **Growth of ultra-processed food industry:** The sector grew at around **13% annually (2011–2021)**, increasing unhealthy food consumption.
4. **Urbanisation and income rise:** Higher income and urban living have led to **increased intake of calorie-rich foods and reduced activity levels**.
5. **Low awareness and weak implementation:** Limited awareness of healthy diets and weak enforcement of **FSSAI guidelines** have worsened the situation.
6. **Obesity no longer linked to wealth:** Cheap junk food has made obesity common across all sections, not only among the rich.
7. **Generational dietary impact:** Poor dietary habits of mothers affect children, creating a **cycle of obesity across generations**.
8. **Shift from undernutrition to silent acceptance:** Earlier, excess weight was seen as a sign of prosperity in a society shaped by undernutrition, which delayed recognition of obesity as a serious problem.

Impacts of Obesity in India

1. **Health burden of diseases:** Obesity increases risk of **non-communicable diseases (NCDs)** like diabetes, cancer, and heart disease.
2. **Child development issues:** Obesity leads to **poor physical and cognitive development** in children.
3. **Psychosocial effects:** Individuals face **body image issues and mental stress** due to social stigma.
4. **Economic impact:** Obesity causes **loss of productivity, absenteeism, and higher healthcare costs**.
5. **Pressure on healthcare system:** Rising NCDs increase strain on the already **fragile public health system**.
6. **Social inequality dimension:** Vulnerable groups and women are more affected, leading to **greater health and economic disparities**.

Pharmaceuticalisation of Obesity

1. **Trigger indicating institutional shift:** Recent actions linking employment conditions with BMI show how obesity is being treated as a measurable risk, reinforcing the push toward medical solutions.
2. **Rise of anti-obesity drugs:** Drugs like **tirzepatide and semaglutide** have expanded rapidly, creating a large treatment market.
3. **Shift from lifestyle to medication:** Obesity is increasingly treated through **medicines instead of behavioural changes**.
4. **Commercial expansion of healthcare:** The success of these drugs shows the rise of a **profitable therapeutic industry**.
5. **Surrogate advertising practices:** Companies use **indirect promotions like awareness campaigns, influencers, and sponsored content** to shape demand.

6. **Delayed regulatory response:** Government restrictions on such promotions came **late**, allowing widespread influence.
7. **Blurring science and marketing:** New drugs are presented as breakthroughs, while their uncertainties receive less attention, making it difficult to separate scientific progress from market-driven promotion.

Major Concerns Related to Pharmaceuticalisation of Obesity

1. **Loss of muscle mass (sarcopenia):** Around **25–40% of weight loss is muscle**, which weakens strength and long-term health.
2. **Risk of incomplete treatment:** Appetite suppression without proper diet and exercise can **harm metabolic resilience**.
3. **Cycle of drug dependency:** Use of one drug leads to side effects, which require **new drugs**, creating a continuous cycle.
4. **New markets for side effects:** Drugs for treating sarcopenia are already in development, expanding the **medical market further**.
5. **Rapid changes in clinical guidelines:** Faster inclusion of drugs raises questions about **long-term evidence and neutrality**.
6. **Neglect of root causes:** Growth of ultra-processed foods continues, while **policy measures like warning labels remain delayed**.
7. **Paradox of the system:** One sector promotes unhealthy consumption, another treats the resulting diseases, and a third manages side effects, creating a cycle that is efficient for markets but weak for public health.
8. **Expansion of medicalisation in daily life:** Obesity is increasingly treated through continuous medical intervention, showing how healthcare is moving into everyday lifestyle issues.

Way Forward

1. **Rebalancing health approach:** There is a need to shift focus from quick medical fixes to long-term lifestyle changes and preventive care.
2. **Focus on lifestyle changes:** Healthy diet, physical activity, proper sleep, and stress control must be the **primary approach**.
3. **Use medicines as support only:** Drugs should act as **adjuncts, not substitutes**, for long-term health improvement.
4. **Ensure transparency in treatment:** Risks of new therapies must be **clearly communicated** to patients.
5. **Strengthen regulation:** Stronger control over **surrogate advertising and promotions** is required.

6. **Address food system issues:** Policies must focus on controlling **ultra-processed food growth and improving nutrition awareness**.
7. **Reinforce ethical medical practice:** Medical professionals should ensure **evidence-based and unbiased decisions**.

Conclusion

Obesity in India reflects a shift from lifestyle imbalance to a system shaped by market-driven medicalisation. While medicines offer short-term relief, they risk creating dependency and ignoring root causes. A balanced approach that prioritises prevention, lifestyle change, and ethical medical practice is essential to ensure long-term health and avoid excessive reliance on pharmaceutical solutions.

Question for practice:

Examine how the rising obesity epidemic in India reflects a shift towards pharmaceuticalisation and what concerns it raises for public health.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

For agri growth in volatile world, look beyond farm gate

Source: The post “**For agri growth in volatile world, look beyond farm gate**” has been created, based on “**For agri growth in volatile world, look beyond farm gate**” published in “Indian Express” on 16th April 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-3- Economy

Context: India’s agricultural economy is currently valued at around **\$600 billion** and has the potential to cross **\$1 trillion over the next decade** if value-added processing and market linkages expand. However, recent tensions in the **West Asia conflict** have exposed the fragility of global supply chains on which Indian agriculture depends. Therefore, sustaining agricultural growth in a volatile global environment requires investments beyond the farm gate in processing, logistics, storage, and market integration.

Why India Must Look Beyond the Farm Gate

1. Global supply chain disruptions affect agriculture

- a. India’s agriculture sector depends heavily on imported fertilisers, energy supplies, and freight logistics.
- b. Geopolitical tensions such as disruptions linked to the **Strait of Hormuz** create volatility in input availability and transportation costs.
- c. These input shocks are likely to recur due to structural global dependencies rather than temporary disturbances.
- d. Therefore, strengthening downstream value chains can reduce vulnerability to such external shocks.

2. Investments in processing and logistics strengthen agricultural resilience

- a. Investments beyond the farm gate in processing, storage, logistics, and market integration strengthen domestic consumption and export competitiveness.
- b. Deeper integration into agri-value chains helps diversify market linkages and reduces dependence on unstable input supply routes.
- c. Such investments enable agriculture to transition from production-led growth to value-led growth.

3. Trade agreements promote value-led agricultural transformation

- a. The **India-EU Free Trade Agreement** signals a shift towards a value-driven growth model rather than tariff-based export expansion.
- b. European markets are shaped more by regulatory compliance requirements than tariff reductions.
- c. Market access increasingly depends on food safety audits, residue limits, sustainability disclosures, and compliant packaging with proper documentation.
- d. Therefore, future agricultural competitiveness depends on regulatory preparedness and institutional capacity.

4. Export opportunities are expanding beyond Europe

- a. New agricultural export opportunities are emerging across West Asia, Central Asia, Southeast Asia, and Africa.
- b. Trade agreements reduce uncertainty across goods trade and investment flows.
- c. This encourages the development of export-oriented agri-processing infrastructure in India.

Evidence from Successful Agricultural Export Sectors

1. Indian processed foods and beverages have established a modest but growing presence in European markets.
2. Exporters who invested in consistent sourcing systems and audit-ready documentation have built durable export relationships.
3. Tea, coffee, spices, and seafood sectors demonstrate similar success through compliance-based value chain integration.
4. These sectors illustrate how institutional capability supports long-term export competitiveness.

Challenges in Ensuring Inclusive Value-Led Agricultural Growth

1. Weak aggregation among smallholders

- a. Smallholder farmers often lack aggregation platforms that enable participation in export markets.
- b. Many Farmer-Producer Organisations (FPOs) face governance and capital limitations.

2. Uneven testing and certification infrastructure

- a. Laboratory and testing infrastructure remains uneven across regions.
- b. Limited testing capacity restricts farmers' ability to meet international regulatory standards.

3. Policy instability weakens export confidence

- a. Export bans and abrupt policy reversals reduce the confidence of global buyers.
- b. Policy uncertainty discourages long-term contracts and investments in export supply chains.

Policy Measures Required to Strengthen Value-Chain Integration

1. Expanding infrastructure support

- a. Public investment is required in laboratory networks, certification systems, cold storage, and logistics infrastructure.
- b. Improved testing infrastructure stabilises export relationships and improves compliance capacity.

2. Strengthening the institutional capability of FPOs

- a. Farmer-Producer Organisations must be supported with stronger governance frameworks and better access to capital.
- b. Strengthened FPOs can enable smallholders to participate more effectively in value chains.

3. Ensuring trade policy stability

- a. Stable trade policies help build buyer confidence and encourage long-term export contracts.
- b. Policy predictability incentivises investment in export-oriented agri-processing capacity.

4. Improving Centre-State coordination

- a. Stronger coordination between the Centre and states is required to improve certification systems, logistics infrastructure, and compliance frameworks.
- b. Better coordination helps widen participation in agricultural exports across regions.

Role of Agribusiness in Driving Agricultural Transformation

1. Agribusiness firms must invest in processing infrastructure, cold storage systems, and traceability mechanisms.
2. Long-term buyer engagement and branding credibility are essential for sustained participation in global value chains.
3. Such investments help convert agriculture into a value-creation ecosystem rather than a raw commodity production system.

Conclusion: India's agricultural growth in a volatile global environment depends on scaling investments beyond the farm gate into processing, logistics, testing infrastructure, and export integration. Institutionalising existing successful models and ensuring the participation of smallholder farmers in value creation will be essential for achieving inclusive and resilient agricultural growth.

Question: In a volatile global environment, India's agricultural growth must move beyond the farm gate to value-led integration into global agri-value chains. Discuss.

Source: [Indian Express](#)

Implications of increasing the size of the Lok Sabha

Source: The post "Implications of increasing the size of the Lok Sabha" has been created, based on "Implications of increasing the size of the Lok Sabha" published in "The Hindu" on 16th April 2026.

UPSC Syllabus: GS Paper-3- Governance

Context: The proposed Constitutional Amendment seeks to increase the strength of the Lok Sabha from **550 to 850 seats** and operationalise delimitation after the freeze ends in 2026. The proposal also links the implementation of **women's reservation** to the delimitation exercise and is expected to significantly affect the composition and functioning of Parliament as well as the federal balance between states.

Key Features of the Proposal

- The Constitutional Amendment Bill proposes to increase the strength of the Lok Sabha from **550 seats to 850 seats** to improve representation based on population changes.
- The number of seats allocated to each State in the Lok Sabha will be determined based on its proportion of the population as recorded in the **latest published Census**, which is expected initially to be the **2011 Census**.
- The Bill clarifies that a **one-third reservation for women** in the Lok Sabha will be implemented only **after delimitation is completed**.
- The reservation for women in Parliament will remain valid for a period of **15 years** from the date of implementation.
- The Bill provides Parliament with the flexibility to determine the **periodicity of delimitation and the Census to be used** for the exercise.
- The provisions relating to delimitation and reservation are also extended to the Union Territories with legislatures such as **Delhi, Jammu and Kashmir, and Puducherry**.

Implications of Increasing the Size of the Lok Sabha

1. Change in the Federal Balance between States

- a. The redistribution of seats based on population will change the relative representation of States in the Lok Sabha.
- b. States such as **Kerala and Tamil Nadu** are likely to lose relative representation, while States such as **Rajasthan, Bihar, and Uttar Pradesh** are expected to gain seats.
- c. Uttar Pradesh and Bihar together may account for about **25 percent of total Lok Sabha seats compared to the present 22 percent**, thereby increasing their influence in national policymaking.

2. Reduced Relative Importance of the Rajya Sabha

- a. The strength of the Rajya Sabha will remain unchanged even though the strength of the Lok Sabha will increase significantly.
- b. At present, the Lok Sabha has **543 members compared to 245 members in the Rajya Sabha**, giving it about **2.2 times the voting strength**.
- c. After expansion to around **815 members**, the Lok Sabha would have approximately **3.3 times the voting strength** of the Rajya Sabha.
- d. This change may weaken the relative importance of the Rajya Sabha in resolving legislative disagreements through joint sittings.

3. Greater Ease for the Government in Passing Legislation

- a. A government that enjoys a majority in the Lok Sabha but not in the Rajya Sabha will still be able to pass legislation through a **joint sitting of Parliament** more easily.

- b. This may increase the dominance of the Lok Sabha in the legislative process and alter the bicameral balance.

4. Increase in the Size of the Council of Ministers

- a. The Constitution limits the size of the Council of Ministers to **15 percent of the strength of the Lok Sabha**.
- b. If the strength of the Lok Sabha increases to 815 members, the maximum size of the Council of Ministers may increase from **81 ministers to about 122 ministers**.
- c. This expansion may strengthen the executive branch and increase its influence within Parliament.

5. Impact on Parliamentary Functioning

- a. **Increasing the number of Members of Parliament** may reduce the opportunity available to each MP to participate effectively in debates and deliberations.
- b. Members may get fewer chances to ask questions and raise issues during the **Zero Hour**.
- c. This concern becomes more significant because Parliament currently meets for **fewer than 70 sitting days in a year**.

6. Implications for the Election of the President and Vice-President

- a. Each Member of Parliament has one vote in the election of the **President and Vice-President**.
- b. Increasing the strength of the Lok Sabha will increase its numerical weight in the electoral college for these constitutional offices.

7. Possible Impact on State Legislatures

- a. Although the Bills do not explicitly propose changes in the size of State legislatures, the **Delimitation Commission** may decide to apply similar principles at the State level.
- b. States such as **Uttar Pradesh** could have more than **600 Assembly seats**, while **West Bengal and Maharashtra** could have around **450 seats each**.
- c. Such expansion may create administrative and logistical challenges in legislative functioning at the State level.

8. Implications for Women's Reservation

- a. The reservation of **one-third seats for women** will be implemented only after delimitation is completed.
- b. The effectiveness and timing of women's reservations, therefore, depend directly on the completion of the delimitation exercise.

9. Lessons from Global Parliamentary Practice

- a. Several democracies, such as the **United Kingdom**, have large legislatures like the **House of Commons with 650 members** and compensate through strong committee systems and more frequent sittings.
- b. In contrast, less than **one-fifth of Bills in India are referred to parliamentary committees**, which limits detailed legislative scrutiny.

Concerns Regarding the Reform Process

1. The proposed Bills are being introduced without adequate public discussion and consultation.
2. The proposals require careful deliberation both inside and outside Parliament due to their long-term institutional impact.
3. Referring the Bills to a **Parliamentary Committee** would help incorporate expert opinion and public feedback.

Way Forward

1. The delimitation exercise should be conducted transparently using objective criteria to maintain trust among States and preserve cooperative federalism.
2. The number of **annual parliamentary sittings should be increased** to ensure effective participation by a larger number of Members of Parliament.
3. The role of the **department-related parliamentary committee system should be strengthened** to improve legislative scrutiny.
4. Institutional safeguards should be introduced to maintain the functional balance between the **Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha**.
5. Adequate public consultation and parliamentary debate should be ensured before implementing structural changes to Parliament.
6. The implementation timeline for **women's reservation** should be clearly defined to avoid delays linked to delimitation uncertainties.

Conclusion: Increasing the strength of the Lok Sabha can improve representational equality and strengthen democratic legitimacy. However, it also has important implications for federal balance, bicameral functioning, executive-legislative relations, and parliamentary effectiveness, and therefore must be accompanied by institutional reforms and wider consultation to ensure its successful implementation.

Question: The proposal to increase the size of the Lok Sabha has significant implications for India's federal balance and parliamentary functioning. Examine.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

In workers' protests in Noida and beyond, a test of labour reforms

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 3- Indian economy

Introduction

Recent strikes by gig workers and protests by factory workers in Uttar Pradesh highlight low wages and poor working conditions. These events show the operational challenges in labour reforms. The four labour codes — **Code on Wages, Code on Social Security, Industrial Relations Code, and Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code** — aim to simplify labour laws. Their impact on employment and wages is incremental and varies across sectors, firm sizes, and worker categories.

What are the key issues in India's labour sector?

1. **Low wages and poor working conditions:** Workers face wage suppression and unsafe conditions, which lead to protests and dissatisfaction.
2. **Weak enforcement in informal sector:** Most workers are in the informal sector, where enforcement is weak and regulations are not followed.
3. **Rising "Contractualisation":** To avoid rigid labour regulations, many firms employ contract workers at significantly lower wages (often less than half of permanent payroll) with no long-term security.
4. **Limited reach of social security schemes:** Benefits under **EPF and ESIC** exclude many workers due to outdated thresholds.
5. **Gender Disparity:** Female labour force participation remains low (roughly 33.7%), and women are disproportionately represented in unpaid household work or low-paying "helper" roles in family enterprises.

What reforms have been introduced to address these issues?

1. **Introduction of four labour codes:** The four codes aim to rationalise India's complex labour regulatory system.
2. **Focus on wage correction:** The **Code on Wages** aims to reduce wage inequality at the lower end of the wage distribution through a national floor wage.
3. **Improving productivity conditions:** Labour codes enable better productivity through worker protection, reduced compliance burden, and efficient labour allocation.
4. **Compositional employment changes:** Employment effects are expected through shifts in type and quality of jobs, not immediate job growth.
5. **Nature of employment impact:** Employment effects are largely **compositional**, reflecting shifts in type and quality of jobs rather than immediate job creation.
6. **Productivity impact depends on implementation:** Productivity gains are expected to be **moderately positive**, but they depend critically on the quality of implementation.

What are the challenges in implementing these labour reforms?

1. **Heterogeneous outcomes across sectors:** Impact varies across sectors, firm sizes, and worker categories, making outcomes uneven.
2. **Higher compliance burden on SMEs:** Small firms face disproportionate costs, which can offset productivity gains, unlike large firms that benefit from stability and lower turnover.
3. **Weak enforcement reduces effectiveness:** Minimum wages remain non-binding, and safety rules are not followed due to poor enforcement.
4. **Threshold-based distortions in firms:** Firms avoid scaling up or split operations to escape regulatory thresholds.

5. **Gig and Platform Worker Coverage:** Defining employer-employee relationships for gig workers and guaranteeing them social security remains complex.
6. **Delayed Rule Notification:** Many states have not yet finalized rules under all four codes, leading to a transitional overlap of old and new laws.

What should be done to ensure effective labour reforms?

1. **Strengthen enforcement mechanisms:** Use **digital wage payments, electronic employment records, and data-driven inspection systems**. Targeted inspections based on risk profiling can reduce rent-seeking.
2. **Build administrative capacity:** Strong capacity at central and state levels is needed for consistent enforcement.
3. **Targeted inspection system:** Inspections based on risk profiling can improve efficiency and reduce opportunities for rent-seeking.
4. **Calibrate national floor wage properly:** The wage should be binding but sustainable, considering regional cost of living and productivity differences. Regular revision should be linked to inflation and productivity.
5. **Support SMEs for transition:** Provide compliance subsidies, tax incentives, simplified reporting, affordable credit, and access to technology.
6. **Expand social security coverage:** Revise **EPF and ESIC thresholds**, index them to inflation, and operationalise provisions for gig and platform workers.
7. **Address threshold distortions:** Introduce smoother and graduated frameworks to encourage firm expansion.
8. **Invest in skill development:** Expand vocational training, strengthen industry-academia links, and promote continuous skill upgrading.
9. **Ensure policy coordination:** Align labour reforms with industrial policy, trade liberalisation, infrastructure, and investment promotion.
10. **Improve administrative integration:** Develop a single-window system and improve coordination between central and state governments.
11. **Leverage digital architecture:** Build integrated labour databases, real-time monitoring systems, and public data on workplace safety and employment conditions.

Conclusion

Labour codes are an important step to modernise labour regulation and improve efficiency, formalisation, and productivity. However, outcomes depend on effective enforcement, institutional capacity, and supportive policies. Without proper implementation, benefits will remain uneven, and labour distress will continue despite reforms.

Question for practice:

Examine how recent workers' protests in Noida and beyond reflect the challenges in implementing labour reforms in India, and discuss the measures needed to ensure their effective outcomes.

Source: [Indian Express](#)

Placing Women at the Core of Democracy

UPSC Syllabus: Gs Paper 1- Social empowerment And **Gs Paper 2-** laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of vulnerable sections.

Introduction

For decades, women were viewed as recipients of welfare rather than active participants in shaping democracy. This understanding is now changing with the enactment of the **Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam**, which provides **33% reservation in the Lok Sabha and State Legislatures**. The reform goes beyond representation and equality. It aims to improve institutional design, incorporate diverse lived experiences, and strengthen democratic functioning. By expanding participation and decision-making capacity, it seeks to make governance more inclusive, responsive, and rooted in real social realities.

Initiative to Place Women at the Core

- Legislative Quotas:** India's Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam (106th Amendment Act) is a landmark reform aiming to reserve 33% of seats in the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies for women.
- Beyond Representation:** The reform focuses on **institutional innovation**, not just inclusion, aiming to strengthen democratic capacity and resilience.
- Grassroots Impact:** The 73rd and 74th Amendments already reserve one-third of seats in local bodies (Panchayats and Municipalities), transforming local leadership and prioritizing issues like **sanitation, water, and education**.

Democratic Transformation

- Expansion of Democratic Base:** The Act expands the **social and perceptive base of democracy**, making representation broader and more inclusive.
- Shift in Political Recruitment:** It challenges dominance of **dynasty, caste, and masculinised networks**, pushing parties to nurture real talent.
- From Procedural to Deliberative Democracy:** The reform shifts democracy from a focus on **procedures and institutional outcomes** to a focus on **quality of debate, reasoning, and competing arguments**.
- Epistemic Diversity:** Inclusion of women brings **new perspectives and lived experiences**, enriching decision-making processes.

Benefits of Women-Centric Democracy

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1. **Improved Legislative Quality:** More women will expand the **content, tone, and ethical depth of debates**, making discussions more balanced.
2. **Better Governance Outcomes:** Policies will reflect **multiple lived experiences**, leading to more effective and inclusive governance.
3. **Recognition of Real Issues:** Concerns like **domestic violence, childcare, sanitation, and access to services** will gain central importance.
4. **Stronger Policy Feedback Loop:** When decision-makers face real consequences, the **gap between state and citizens reduces**, improving responsiveness.
5. **Grounded Political Economy:** Women's role in **informal sectors like agriculture, SHGs, and domestic work** will inform better policy design.
6. **Policy Based on Real Lives:** Policy-making shifts from **statistics alone to real-life experiences**, improving responsiveness.

What are the Challenges

1. **Institutional Dependency:** Implementation of the **Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam** depends on timely completion of **Census and delimitation**, requiring strong administrative preparedness..
2. **Resistance from Social Structures:** Deep-rooted **social hierarchies and traditional mindsets** may slow or distort reform outcomes.
3. **Political Party Constraints:** Parties may fail to **genuinely include women at all levels**, treating them as symbolic figures.
4. **Risk of Elite Capture:** Existing **political oligarchies** may dominate, limiting representation of diverse voices.
5. **Behavioural and Cultural Barriers:** Women still face limits on **mobility, time, and autonomy**, restricting effective participation.
6. **Constraints Faced by Women:** Women face restrictions due to **social norms, limited mobility, time constraints, and reduced autonomy**.
7. **Societal Attitude Gap:** Lack of **space, dignity, and respect in society** may hinder meaningful participation of women.

Way Forward

1. **Administrative Preparedness:** Ensure timely completion of **Census and delimitation** to operationalise the **Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam**.
2. **Reform of Party Structures:** Political parties must ensure **real inclusion of women as equal actors**, not placeholders.

3. **Inclusive Representation:** Voices of both **marginalised and mainstream women** must be actively included.
4. **Social Attitude Transformation:** Society must provide **space, dignity, and respect**, enabling women's full participation.
5. **Encouraging Women's Agency:** Women need to overcome **social constraints** and assert their role in public life.

Conclusion

Placing women at the core of democracy is not limited to reservation but reflects a deeper process of democratic refinement. It requires institutional readiness, political restructuring, and social transformation. By incorporating diverse perspectives and lived experiences, decision-making becomes more inclusive and intelligent. This reform strengthens the link between citizens and the state and improves governance outcomes. Over time, it will help build a more responsive, balanced, and resilient democratic system rooted in real societal needs.

Question for practice:

Discuss how placing women at the core of democracy through the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam can transform democratic functioning, and examine the key benefits and challenges associated with its implementation.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

